Preparing Tomorrow's Stars

INDIANA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

The State of Indiana Principal Instructional Leadership Guidebook

The State of Indiana Principal Instructional Leadership Guidebook

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Preface

The State of Indiana congratulates early-career principals for their decision to lead schools and thanks seasoned principals for their continuing commitment to effectively lead their schools' improvement efforts.

Today, more than ever, greater accountability for school improvement has been placed on principals. Principals are expected to be the instructional leaders and managers of schools, which means they not only know *how* to be effective leaders, but they are also able to *do* what it takes to lead effectively.

> *A successful principalship has been described as the complex art of balancing knowledge and experiences with personal relationships.*

Being a school principal often can be an overwhelming and underappreciated job, especially for principals in their first years on the job as they are confronted with the challenge of putting into practice what they have learned in their preparation programs and building relationships with teachers, students, parents, and the surrounding community.

The State of Indiana recognizes the need to support principals. For this reason, the State of Indiana has partnered with Learning Point Associates to develop this principal instructional leadership guidebook.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Overview and Introduction

About the Guidebook

This guidebook is structured to engage you, the principal, not just as the reader but beyond—as the learner and leader who is supporting, guiding, and directing implementation of policies, procedures, and processes that improve student achievement.

> *This guidebook serves as a reference for the novice Indiana principal trying to better understand the "managerial" responsibilities of his or her new job, as well as a resource to help early-career principals and seasoned principals embark on the road to instructional leadership. The road map to instructional leadership is presented as the following topics are covered:*
>
> - *Role of the principal as instructional leader*
>
> - *School manager with an eye on instructional leadership*
>
> - *School principal who sustains instructional leadership*

Throughout the guidebook, **research** indicative of effective instructional leadership is presented, along with what can be learned from **pictures of practice**, or research-based cases, scenarios, and vignettes that describe the processes and procedures other principals have used or developed to improve leadership and sustain it.

> *Altogether, the pictures of practice represent the spectrum of school settings, locales, and principal experiences and challenges. The pictures of practice run the gamut from elementary to high schools, from rural to urban, from principals in their first years on the job to principals with over 10 years of experience.*

The pictures of practice cover a range of issues related to becoming an effective school leader as described by various leadership standards and frameworks currently influencing and dominating the education leadership literature. To this end, topics such as developing a vision, establishing professional learning communities, using data effectively, and communicating effectively with parents contain a research base and pictures of practice.

Efforts to cover every possible variation of school setting, leadership issue, and principal experience were made; however, in many cases, concise and engaging information took precedent over lengthy and potentially disengaging information. Therefore, the pictures of practice are a representative sample of school contexts, settings, and principal experiences.

Throughout this guidebook, you will encounter self-reflection questions, study group activities, staff activities, protocols, summaries of processes, and lists of tools and resources that will help you along the road to instructional leadership.

Each leadership challenge—no matter how familiar or similar to other challenges—is filled with its own idiosyncrasies; however, most, if not all, processes, procedures, self-reflection questions, resources, and tools included in the pictures of practice can be used by all principals regardless of school context and setting. To support applying the research, processes, and procedures in this guidebook to unique school settings, at the end of each section, you are prompted to record your Personal Plan, given your own school setting and practices. In the Personal Plan pages, space is provided to brainstorm steps for applying practices presented in the guidebook.

Using the Guidebook

While principals in their first three to five years on the job are the main audience for this book, it also can be a helpful resource to seasoned principals and those serving as mentors or professional development providers to principals.

This guidebook can be used in different ways:

- Early-career principals: Introduction to exploring the available resources, research, and experiences of other principals.

- Seasoned principals: A re-introduction to the available resources, research, and experiences of other principals; a facilitator's guide for principal mentors or study group participants.

The guidebook's first two sections (Overview and Introduction, and Background Information and Resources) set the stage for the heart of the guidebook: understanding what to know and do as an instructional leader. It is recommended that you read these sections (pp. 1–16) before diving into the third section, On the Road to Instructional Leadership.

If you are novice principal, it is recommended that you work through the guidebook from beginning to end, especially the instructional leadership section and subsections, as each subsection of the instructional leadership section builds on the prior subsection, especially the Personal Plan.

If you are a more seasoned principal, a mentor of principals, or professional development provider, only certain sections or subsections may be of interest to you. If you are mainly interested in focusing on specific leadership standard, for example, you can quickly identify and access the subsections that address that standard (see p. 3).

Here are the standards for effective, high-quality leadership around which the guidebook is organized:

- Developing and articulating a vision

- Strategic decision making and implementation

- Creating a culture of learning

- Providing high-quality professional growth opportunities to staff

- Using data effectively

- Understanding curriculum and instruction

- Engaging all members of the staff

- Understanding effective management

- Communicating effectively and honestly with staff, students, and community members

A key section of the guidebook is On the Road to Instructional Leadership, which includes five subsections (see the table of contents for subsection titles and pages). The opening page of each subsection begins by noting both the primary and secondary leadership standards addressed therein. That information is intended to guide readers who want to select from among the subsections only those of greatest interest.

"Modern-Day Principal" Job Description

Open Position: School Principal

Job Description: The ideal candidate will be an educational visionary; instructional and curriculum leader; assessment expert; disciplinarian; community builder; public relations expert; budget analyst; facility manager; special programs administrator; and expert overseer of legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. He or she will be the broker of the often-conflicting interests of parents, teachers, students, corporation administrators, unions, and state and federal agencies, and must be sensitive to the widening range of student needs (DeVita, 2005). This individual should display characteristics and skills known to increase student achievement. Some of these roles and responsibilities are listed below.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations

- Willing to and actively challenges the status quo

- Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation

- Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling

- Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent

- Establishes strong lines of communication with teachers and among students, which make for quality contact and interactions

- Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines

- Is aware of personal aspects of teachers and staff

- Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices

- Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices

- Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies

- Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus

- Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for successful execution of their jobs

- Ensures that the faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school culture

- Monitors effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning

- Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments

- Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments, and acknowledges school failures

- Advocates as spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders

- Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003)

Congratulations! You meet the qualifications to be a school principal! That's right—you are the embodiment of the school manager, the instructional leader, and the world-view construct of the savvy business and political leader.

Now what? If you are an early-career principal, you are probably wondering where to start on your exhaustive yet incomplete list of roles and responsibilities. If you have been a principal for some time, you may be wondering how the expectations of today's principals have increased and shifted and how to meet the new requirements mandated by local, state, and federal legislation.

My Personal Plan

In three sentences, how would I describe my job?

1. _____

   _____

2. _____

   _____

3. _____

   _____

What do I consider my top three roles and responsibilities as a:

❑ School manager

   1.

   2.

   3.

❑ Instructional leader

   1.

   2.

   3.

❑ Community member

   1.

   2.

   3.

Additional notes:

Background Information and Resources

Student Achievement and the Principal

Does a principal make a difference in student achievement? According to research, the answer is an unequivocal **yes**.

Recent research from the Wallace Foundation suggests that principal and superintendent leadership have a greater impact on student learning than any other factor except the quality of classroom instruction (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) conducted a meta-analysis and identified 21 leadership responsibilities. They found that when an average principal improved his or her demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities, student test scores increased by 10 percent.

The growing consensus in research is that effective principals are those who influence student achievement by supporting, guiding, and directing continuous school improvement. For many schools, the principal is central to "turning a school around," especially in high-poverty and low-performing schools. According to extensive empirical analyses, students at risk for failure experience significant positive academic and emotional advantages as a result of successful implementation of long-term, integrated educational reforms (Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, & Flowers, 1997). School leadership can establish the stability and consistency necessary to recognize problems and make the changes needed to improve student learning and achievement.

Despite the known effects successful leadership has on schools, this type of effective leadership is less likely to be found in the schools where it is needed the most—high-poverty, low-performing schools. This suggests that there is value in changing or adding leadership capacity at these schools. Moreover, working together, a principal and the teaching staff can begin to address an issue and make the necessary changes that support school improvement goals.

Changing Times: The Effects of Standards-Based Reform on the Principalship

No Child Left Behind: National Education Reform Localizing Accountability

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001, also known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, places greater responsibility on school leaders to increase student achievement for all students. If school leaders fail, the consequences are stark: offering parents and families other school choices, providing additional academic support services to students, implementing new curricula, decreasing management authority at the school level, and changing the school governance structure.

Still, many of the basic NCLB premises have been around for at least a decade. In *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*, Richard F. Elmore (2000) asserts that accountability, staff quality, the school as the unit of accountability, and disaggregating student achievement within a

school are critical to standards-based reform. These assertions are consistent with NCLB provisions, as follows:

- Similar to standards-based reform, NCLB localizes accountability for student learning to the school and the people who work in it. This carries an explicit message that students learn largely as a consequence of what goes on inside schools, and NCLB identifies schools as the primary units of accountability (e.g., school report cards) in virtually every state accountability system.

- NCLB reveals a critical weakness: schools' inability to account for why certain students are academically performing at or above the expected norm and why other students in the same school are not.

Therefore, it can be argued that, to a certain extent, the NCLB law is a byproduct of standards-based reform, and as mentioned, both have placed a greater responsibility on the school principal for student achievement. Prior to standards-based reform, there was limited, if any, discussion about the achievement gaps.[1] Today, with the reporting of annual performance for all students— by race, ethnicity, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and English language learners—schools are held accountable for ensuring all student groups are meeting annual performance targets. These disaggregated data reported for NCLB have increasingly sparked dialogue on the role of the principal in the improvement of instruction and student achievement.

Public Law 221: The Indiana State-Level Accountability System

Local education reforms already in place in many states across the country, including Indiana, can be credited for national education legislative reforms, like NCLB. In 1999, the Indiana legislature passed the bipartisan Public Law 221, Indiana's comprehensive accountability system for K–12 education. Under Public Law 221, Indiana school corporations and schools are placed in one of the following five categories:

- Exemplary Progress

- Commendable Progress

- Academic Progress

- Academic Watch (priority)

- Academic Probation (high priority)

Placement into one of the five categories is based on improvement and performance data from the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP+). More specifically, placements are based on:

- The percentages of all students who pass the ISTEP+ English and Math test (averaged across subjects and grade levels).

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[1] The term *achievement gap* refers to the gap that exists in standardized test scores, advance placement course participation, high school graduation rates, and college entrance and graduation rates between African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and low-income students and their white, Asian, and economically advantaged peers.

- Improvement, calculated by the change in the percentage of students enrolled for 70 percent of the school year (nonmobile cohort of students) passing the ISTEP+.

- Improvement, based on a rolling three-year average (two years after initial year for elementary and middle schools, and one year from initial year for high schools).[2]

By taking performance and improvement into consideration, Public Law 221 enables schools with lower performance but strong improvement to be placed in the same category as schools with higher performance and lower improvement. This is a distinguishing feature from the NCLB Act, which looks at percentage of students passing by grade level from year to year.

As with all states, Indiana was required to incorporate NCLB requirements into its existing accountability system. This means that Indiana corporations and schools that do not make adequately yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB for two consecutive years cannot receive a placement higher than Academic Progress on the state accountability system.

Attached to the placement categories are consequences, though none include losing funding. For more information about the consequences corporations and schools face under Public Law 221, see the fact sheet in the appendix or visit **www.doe.state.in.us/pl221/welcome.html**.

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[2] Although the law was passed in 1999, it was not until August 2006 that the state put the law into action by adopting the placement categories. Therefore, in terms of measuring improvement, 2006 is considered the initial year.

My Personal Plan

What more do I want to find out about:	How I will find out more about:
How principals impact student achievement	How principals impact student achievement
The federal legislation, No Child Left Behind	The federal legislation, No Child Left Behind
Public Law 221	Public Law 221

Additional notes:

Indiana and the Principalship: Getting to Know Your School Corporation and Context

With nearly 60 percent of principals retiring, resigning, or simply leaving their positions within the next five years (Peterson, 2002), on-the-job support structures for all new principals are imperative. While resources do exist to ease the tasks of a principal, without clear communication, these resources tend to remain buried in the abundance of advertisements principals receive on a daily basis. Table 1 lists some key resources to help facilitate your acquaintance with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). These include contact information for IDOE offices of interest, readily available resources about the state's standards and policies, and information about your corporation and school annual performance.

Table 1. Key State-Level Resources for Principals

Resource	Description of Resource	Website Address	How I could utilize this resource?
Indiana Principal Leadership Academy (IPLA)	IPLA is a national model for the training of principals as leaders of instructors. Through academy experiences and educational challenges, these leaders are empowered with effective behaviors and standards. Graduates of the IPLA set the pace for statewide educational improvement and reform, and are recognized as exemplary educational leaders in Indiana and throughout the country.	www.doe.state.in.us/ipla/welcome.html	
State of Indiana Academic Standards	Indiana established world-class academic standards in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These standards outline what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Organized by content area and grade level, this website allows Indiana's Academic Standards, and their accompanying resources, to be viewed, printed, or downloaded.	ideanet.doe.state.in.us/standards/welcome2.html	

Resource	Description of Resource	Website Address	How I could utilize this resource?
State of Indiana Teaching Standards	In 1994, the Indiana Professional Standards Board adopted the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) model standards for initial licensing of teachers as the basis for Indiana's new system for preparing and licensing teachers. The INTASC standards describe what every beginning education professional should know and be able to do. Each standard includes knowledge, disposition, and performance statements used in meeting the standard. Knowledge statements describe the body of knowledge critical to successful teaching; performance statements describe the application of that knowledge; disposition statements describe the habitual behaviors that communicate the qualities or traits valued by the teaching profession. Through performances, candidates demonstrate their ability to combine content knowledge and professional dispositions necessary for the successful teaching of students.	ideanet.doe.state.in.us/dps/standards/teacherindex.html ideanet.doe.state.in.us/dps/welcome.html	

Resource	Description of Resource	Website Address	How I could utilize this resource?
Assessments conducted by the State of Indiana in the Accountability System for Academic Progress (ASAP)	Primary indicators of improvement and performance; required administration of mandatory annual assessments The primary indicators of school improvement and performance are: • **ISTEP**+ English/language arts and mathematics tests at Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 • **ISTEP**+ science tests and social studies tests, when implemented, at Grades 5, 7, and 9 • Science and social studies tests at Grades 4, 6, and 8 • **Core 40** end-of-course exams If the board determines that adequate resources are not available to support administration of all mandatory annual assessments, schools are required to administer only the following: • **ISTEP**+ English/language arts and mathematics tests at Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 • **ISTEP**+ science tests and social studies tests, when implemented, at Grades 5, 7, and 9	www.doe.state.in.us/asap/accountability.html www.doe.state.in.us/asap/accountability2.html#anchor259869 www.doe.state.in.us/sir/t-assessment.html ideanet.doe.state.in.us/istep/welcome.html mustang.doe.state.in.us/SEARCH/search.cfm (trend data for corporations and schools) www.doe.state.in.us/asap/accountability.html	

Resource	Description of Resource	Website Address	How I could utilize this resource?
School Improvement Resources & School Improvement Plan	This website is designed to provide school administrators, teachers, and other members of the school community access to school improvement resources. The website includes links to Indiana Department of Education Web pages that are relevant to school improvement, a searchable database of external technical-assistance providers with expertise related to school improvement, and links to other Internet-based school improvement resources.	www.doe.state.in.us/sir/welcome.html www.doe.state.in.us/asap/sip.html	
Indiana Chamber of Commerce	The chamber has full-time legislative experts in the areas of tax and public finance, education and congressional affairs, environment and energy, economic development and small business, labor relations and civil justice, and health care and workplace safety.	www.indianachamber.com/	

As a Principal, What Else Do You Need to Know About Your Corporation and School?

While the resources listed in Table 1 can provide a great starting point for you to become acquainted with the state's assessments, learning standards, and teaching standards, you will also want to explore the data available at your school and corporation. If you are a new principal, looking for collected, analyzed, and organized data is a smart first step because:

- You will begin to develop the habit of looking at data and using data to make decisions.

- You avoid a common pitfall of new principals who become overwhelmed with the task of collecting data and eventually lose focus.

Key Corporation- and School-Level Resources:

- Corporation beliefs (mission and vision)

- School beliefs (school mission and vision)

- Corporation improvement plans (including teacher professional development goals and student learning goals)

- School improvement plans (including teacher professional development goals and student learning goals)

- Corporation report card and other corporation data

- School report card and other school data

With these readily available data, an early-career principal can begin to gain a general sense of whether the students' learning needs, as depicted in the school report card, are being addressed in the school improvement plan. These easy and preliminary steps to using data to begin to make necessary changes or refrain from making changes put you ahead of the game. According to Victoria Bernhardt (1998), an expert on using data for continuous school improvement, few schools take the time to understand the impact of current processes on their students even though schools that understand the needs of their students are more successful in planning changes and remain more focused during implementation than schools that simply gather but make no sustained effort to analyze and use data.

*Indiana's Accountability System for Academic Progress—School Data Section
(www.doe.state.in.us/asap/data.html)*

*A primary resource for school and corporation data is the Indiana Department of
Education's Accountability System for Academic Progress (ASAP). The School Data section
of the ASAP website provides informational, demographic, and achievement data about
Indiana schools. You can disaggregate the data using multiple variables and graphically
display the results. This section also allows for comparisons to similar schools and links to
possible strategies for improvement.*

*By accessing this state resource, you can select data that help you answer the
following questions:*

- *Where can I find data for one Indiana school or corporation?*

- *Where can I find a list of Indiana schools that share certain characteristics?*

- *Where can I find a list of Indiana school corporations that share certain
  characteristics?*

- *Did my school or corporation make adequate yearly progress (AYP)?*

- *What Indiana schools have shown success with specific student populations on
  the ISTEP+?*

- *Where can I find data for the state of Indiana?*

*Information regarding state-level assessments can also be found to help you answer the
following questions:*

- *What assessments are used by the state of Indiana to monitor student success?*

- *What other data would be useful in determining the areas of improvement that will
  have the greatest impact on student achievement?*

- *What ISTEP+ assessments are scheduled for Indiana students in the next few years?*

Self-Reflection Questions:

- *What have I discovered that I did not expect (challenges, bridges, data gaps,
  instructional strategies, etc.) about my corporation and school from the available
  reports?*

- *What more do I want to learn about the community, corporation, and school?*

On the Road to Instructional Leadership

"Effective leaders are strong educators, anchoring their work on central issues of learning and teaching and school improvement." (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 5)

Learning and demonstrating the knowledge and dispositions that epitomize the high-quality instructional leader presents both a challenge and responsibility to principals. To help new principals on the road to instructional leadership, this section addresses the role of an instructional leader and what an effective leader looks like. This section begins by defining *instructional leader* and presenting the leadership standards developed to date. From there, the subsections present knowledge and the application of knowledge in areas that—based on research and the leadership standards—will improve the principal's practices in ways that will have a positive impact on student achievement.

What is an instructional leader? Consider the following definitions:

- [One who] leads effective education initiatives by creating and operating schools where faculty expect high achievement from all students, understand the depth and breadth of rigorous academic and technical standards, and incorporate these standards thoroughly and systemically into the curriculum (Hoachlander, Alts, & Beltranena, 2001, p. 1)

- A transformational change agent who is an expert in both the core technology of the school—teaching and learning—and in the shaping of the organization through collaborative leadership and decision making (Clark & Clark, 1994; Clark & Clark, 1996).

A common theme in these two definitions is the focus on teaching and learning and on changes in the curriculum in support of high academic expectations and standards. These definitions also call for staff ownership and collaboration. Although the instructional leader possesses some expertise and knowledge of instruction and curriculum, an *effective* instructional leader relies heavily on the expertise and knowledge of those most likely to implement school improvement (i.e., teachers) and the recipients (i.e., students).

Overall, these definitions suggest a strong association between instructional leadership and a high-quality, effective leader.

What Do I Need to Know and Be Able to Do to Be a High-Quality, Effective Leader?

One of the greatest challenges and responsibilities placed on principals, as mentioned, is to possess the ability to learn and demonstrate the knowledge and dispositions that epitomize the high-quality instructional leader. Such an instructional leader engages the school staff, establishes a shared school vision for continuous school improvement using data effectively, sets clear student learning goals, and displays many other behaviors known to positively affect student achievement.

Current research shows that many leadership styles and approaches can lead to school improvements. Therefore, researchers and practitioners have been grappling with quantifying effective instructional leadership practices into one set of standards that define high-quality leaders. Leadership standards, such as those developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), have begun to answer this question. The six ISLLC standards provide benchmarks against which leaders can measure their knowledge, dispositions, and performance abilities.[3]

In 1998, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) drew upon the ISLLC standards and several other reports to create its own set of standards and skills. Since then, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the Education Leaders Constituent (ELCC), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) have developed leadership frameworks and standards that help define high-quality school leadership.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) completed a "cross-walk" of the leadership standards from ISLLC, ELCC, NAESP, SREB, and McREL. ECS found that all the standards for high-quality, effective leaders generally fit within the following categories:

- Developing and articulating a vision

- Strategic decision making and implementation

- Creating a culture of learning

- Providing high-quality professional growth opportunities to staff

- Using data effectively

- Understanding curriculum and instruction

- Engaging all members of the staff

- Understanding effective management

- Communicating effectively and honestly with staff, students, and community members (Anthes, 2005)

The ECS cross-walk of standards provides a summative representation of multiple versions of leadership standards. At the same time, the ECS cross-walk of standards provides wide-ranging definitions for each standard, which enable education leaders to see how the various standards align with one another and ensure that there are no gaps in their standards.

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[3] The ISLLC standards are based on a body of research on productive leadership and the experiences from the original 24 member states. To date, more than 35 states, including Indiana, have adopted the ISLLC standards in some shape or form to create licensure requirements, develop curriculum for preparation programs, or help districts develop leadership capacity (Anthes, 2005).

My Personal Plan

Based on the two definitions of an instructional leader, I am an instructional leader in the following ways:

My personal goals for growth as an instructional leader, so that I can know and be able to do what is necessary to be a high–quality, effective leader, are as follows:

Reviving and Devising a Shared School Vision That Thrives

Primary leadership standard addressed: Developing and articulating a vision.
Secondary leadership standards addressed: Engaging all members of the staff;
Communicating effectively and honestly with staff, students, and community members.

Research has found that a common feature in successful schools is the persistent focus on student achievement (Cotton, 2000; Mendez-Morse, 1992; Scheurich, 1998), and the focus on student achievement tends to be a reflection of the school's vision and belief system. A study of successful high-poverty schools found that high-performing schools shared common cultural characteristics and beliefs that were promoted by the school principal (Scheurich, 1998). At the heart of their beliefs lie five core statements.

Core Beliefs of High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools

- All children can succeed at high academic levels.

- The school is child or learner centered.

- All children must be treated with love, appreciation, care, and respect—no exceptions allowed.

- The racial culture, including the first language of the child, is always highly valued—no exceptions allowed.

- The school exists for and serves the community—there is little separation. (Scheurich, 1998)

A school vision reflects the beliefs of those within the school community. The beliefs of the school community (i.e., principal and staff) are reflected in the attitudes, behaviors, and responsiveness between staff and students. When a shared set of beliefs— particularly a set that includes the core beliefs of high-poverty, high-performing schools—has not been established, the school vision is distorted or destroyed by the individual, pervasive beliefs within the school community. For this reason, it is crucial that the school principal believes and declares the belief that all students can learn.

Research studies of successful high-poverty schools have all concluded that schools where the leadership believes in their students' success are also schools where students raise their level of performance (Quint, 1994; Reyes, Scribner, & Scribner, 1999; Scheurich, 1998). Schools where the principal and teachers verbally and visually communicate their vision on an ongoing basis by continually declaring high expectations and a strong belief that all students can learn tend to be successful in raising student achievement. In fact, the strategy of posting and displaying graphs, charts, and pictures of success in the classrooms, hallways, offices, local stores, and community organizations to make a school's vision public and visible has proven to be effective. A study of 90 percent high-poverty, 90 percent high-minority, and 90 percent high-performing schools (90/90/90 schools) notes:

> The most casual observer could not walk down a hallway without seeing charts, graphs, and tables that displayed student achievement information, as well as data about the continuous improvement students had made. The data were on display not only in principals' offices, but also throughout the schools. (Reeves, 2000, p. 187)

This visibility will inevitably lead to accountability. Therefore, the principal's and teaching staff's willingness to take responsibility for their school's successes and failures are embedded in these acts.

What is a school vision? A school's vision is a declaration of the school community's beliefs and commitment to its students and each other. A school vision "should provide a compelling sense of where the school is headed and, in broad terms, what must be accomplished in the future to fulfill the school's purpose" (Blankstein, 2004, p. 77). A school vision paints a picture of how the school will reach its main goals of educating children and related subgoals such as how students will meet learning standards, how students will be assessed, and how teachers will work together and teach curriculum. It should be a descriptive statement of what the school will be like in the future.

Although principals know what they want their students to achieve, to keep the vision at the forefront and to make the vision a reality, *it is important that the school vision be a shared vision*. Staff buy-in is jeopardized when a school vision is fashioned after one person's vision or one group's vision, as staff are left with a sense of forced compliance as opposed to responding to an internalized commitment (Senge, 1990). One suggestion for creating a shared vision is for the principal to view this endeavor as a capacity-building opportunity to engage all members of the staff, parents, students, and other community members (Mendez-Morse, 1991).

Example of a Shared Vision Statement
By 2010, Whiley High School will be known as an education institute where students learn to be thinkers and inventors. Whiley High School will achieve the reputation of a renaissance school through its learner-centered approach. Students in all groups will meet and exceed the federal and state standardized assessment requirements. The basis for delivering all instruction will be ensuring that students are learning beyond the "what" and "when" to understanding the "how" and "why." The teaching and leadership staff will continually enhance their profession through learning opportunities, and are central to the school's reputation and successes. Ninety percent of students will be college bound.

How does a principal create and articulate a shared vision? To develop a shared vision, consider the following evaluation criteria:

- Can we picture what our future will look like?

- Will the school vision yield a better future for children and staff?

- Does the vision set high standards for student learning?

- Do others, aside from the school principal, believe in the vision?

- If parents had a choice, on what basis would they choose to send their children to our school?

Successful schools and their leadership do not just have a strong vision; they have a particular vision, driven by their passionate commitment to their belief that there are ways to do schooling so that literally all children do well. (Scheurich, 1998, p. 468)

Don't Even Think About Developing and Articulating a Shared Vision Unless, as the Principal, You Have Taken the Time:

- To understand the culture of the school (e.g., the visibility and vigor of the current school vision).

- To assess your vision with the current school vision (e.g., are you enforcing your own values on the staff; have you taken time to understand how to make the vision everyone's, not just yours?)

- To identify school leaders.

- To build relationships with staff.

- To identify "landmines."

In the picture of practice that follows, an experienced principal sets up a school process to engage all stakeholders in articulating their shared beliefs and values to construct a shared vision for their school. The picture of practice provides a structure and format for developing a shared vision collaboratively. As you read this picture of practice, consider your readiness to carry out such an endeavor with your staff.

Picture of Practice:
Creating a Shared Vision

From her previous experience in a similar school setting, Ms. Pavlov, a veteran principal with 10 years of administrative experience and 5 years of teaching experience, understands a vision to be a statement with both practical and visionary messages. Ms. Pavlov has learned as a staff member that the vision statement not only informs the ways in which people view the future, but most importantly, it informs the way people act.

At Ms. Pavlov's former school, the vision was crafted collaboratively; it was a communal agreement and a public statement displayed throughout the school—in the hallways and classrooms. The vision was lived on a daily basis.

Leadership Task

As the new principal at Western Elementary School, Ms. Pavlov has been waiting eagerly for the first meeting with her staff. She has carefully crafted an agenda whereby she intends to lay out her personal vision for the school, and, most importantly, draw attention to the school's vision as it stands in the school improvement plan left in a file cabinet by her predecessor.

Challenges

At the staff meeting, Ms. Pavlov was surprised to realize that her new staff had only a vague recollection of the words representing their vision. The message seemed to have been forgotten in the bottom drawers of their desks. Some teachers made reference to the long, tedious work they had engaged in with the former principal while developing the vision statement. One teacher even chuckled at the mention of the vision statement and alluded to the times when staff meetings were a waste of time.

Addressing the Challenges

Without letting the negative climate take over her goals, Ms. Pavlov saw this moment as an opportunity for the entire faculty to recreate the school's vision and mission statement. To begin, she asked the teachers questions, and had them respond on Post-it notes. Examples of questions Ms. Pavlov asked the staff to think about: How would you describe the place where you would like to work every day? How would you describe the school you would like a very special child (e.g., your own child, niece, nephew, grandchild) to go every day?

After gathering her staff's responses on Post-it notes, Ms. Pavlov asked her teachers to form groups of four to six and then assemble their notes into one consensus of opinion, which was recorded onto chart paper. The chart papers from all the groups were then assembled again into another consenting opinion.

Over the course of the year, Ms. Pavlov orchestrated a similar process with all stakeholders and shared the statements with her staff. From this collection of statements, a draft of the vision statement emerged, and it was then encapsulated in a slogan and bumper sticker.

Overcoming Leadership Task Obstacles

During the development of a vision statement, Mrs. Pavlov faced several obstacles. Given her staff's response to the idea of revising the vision statement, she felt the need to move on and accomplish a quick result. However, she was very aware that good leadership practice called for the crafting of a shared vision with the participation of all the major stakeholders. The benefits of ownership and commitment could not be shortchanged by accelerating the process. This latter approach would only increase the chances of repeating the same mistake of getting the task done, without real support from stakeholders.

Self-Reflection Questions

- What are some core values and beliefs represented in your school's vision statement?

- How does a vision statement serve staff, parents, and students?

- In what way does your personal vision align or clash with the school's vision?

- How will you be attentive to any challenges—anticipated or unanticipated—to creating a shared vision?

Process and Procedure:
Developing a Vision Statement

Materials Needed

- Chart paper
- Tape
- Markers
- Large Post-it notes
- Index cards

Steps

1. Explain what a vision statement is. For example, "A vision statement communicates what the organization stands for, what its members believe, and what ends will be accomplished in keeping with the purpose and beliefs. It serves as a galvanizing force for action."

2. Build a rationale for the vision statement. This step might include explaining why vision statements are helpful (shared sense of purpose, common direction, or energizer) and examining vision statements from other organizations. During this examination, the staff could be asked to analyze the values that seem to be implicit in the vision statement. Identify how a vision statement influences a staff member's life.

3. Invite the staff to take part in the development of the vision statement. Explain that this will allow the opportunity to synthesize individual staff members' dreams or visions into a statement reached through consensus. This statement will represent the ends to which all within the organization will strive.

4. Ask staff members to think for a moment about the place where they would like to send their own very special child to school. How would the child be treated? What would his or her experiences be like? How would he or she feel? Ask staff members to describe their thoughts on Post-it notes.

5. Now ask the staff members to think about the place where they would like to go to work every day. What would it be like? How would they feel? How would people interact? Write this on Post-it notes.

6. Ask staff members to each take their two Post-it notes and combine them into one. Tell them to write their thoughts on an index card.

7. Individuals then meet as table groups of four to six people and share their index cards. After they have all read their index cards, the table group creates a composite representing a group consensus of the individual cards. This is written with markers on chart paper.

8. Pairs of table groups meet and share their charts. They synthesize their two charts into one. The groups continue the process until they create one chart that represents the shared visions of all in the room.

Additional Considerations

- If parents and representative students have not been involved in this process, this same procedure may be repeated with them, and the products of their work brought to the faculty. At this point, the staff could incorporate their ideas with the faculty work.

- At another time, a contest could be held or the group could work together to create a slogan that would encapsulate the vision statement.

- In large schools, Steps 1 through 7 might be conducted within departments. Departments would then share their completed charts and eventually synthesize their work, cross-departmentally, into one charted vision statement on which all can agree.

- Place the vision statement on all printed school material.

Picture of Practice:
Developing and Articulating a Vision to Close Achievement Gaps

"All the strategies in the world will not help to close the achievement gap
if you don't believe it can be done." (Bell, 2003)

School Context

Ms. Dennison is a new principal at Frank Elementary School, nested in a low-income,
urban neighborhood with the following demographic composition:

- 90 percent: free lunch

- 10 percent: reduced-price lunch

- 41 percent: Hispanic

- 39 percent: black

- 12 percent: white

- 5 percent: Asian

- 3 percent: other groups

Leadership Task

Based on her personal experiences, values, and beliefs, Ms. Dennison walked into a new
job, a new community, and a new building with strong ideas about students' ability to
succeed. She was also aware of the challenges she would be facing. The low morale
among staff members was almost legendary in her building, and many teachers were
asking to be transferred to other buildings. Parents had been moving their children to
other schools, even at a high personal cost, ever since they were notified that the school
had not met adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years.

Challenges

One of the most challenging issues to face in this new setting was the gap between the
staff's experiences with poverty and their current vision of the school neighborhood—
parents and students as a deprived setting in need of improvement. Staff members had
abandoned their belief in their students as intellectual people. Instead, they saw their
deficiencies. "They lack motivation, they do not want to study and they don't want to be
here, period." In regard to the parents, the staff at Frank consistently claimed that parents
were to be blamed for their students' lack of engagement. The generalized claim among
the teachers at Frank Elementary was stated loud and clearly at a staff meeting by one of
the lead teachers: "The problem is that those people don't value education."

These and many other remarks reminded Ms. Dennison about the power of "deficit
thinking" (Valencia, 1997) that places the blame for low academic performance on the

students and their families. As a successful professional from a low-income background, she was determined to change this cultural belief. But how could she do it in her first year as principal of Frank Elementary?

Addressing the Challenges

Aware of the fact that changes in cultural beliefs take time, Ms. Dennison decided to approach the subject slowly yet directly, by sharing her own experiences, exposing expectations, and sharing research findings from studies of high-poverty, high-achieving schools. As a starting point, she addressed her staff at a meeting and engaged them in a group activity.

Staff Meeting Activity

Use the process and procedure for developing and articulating a vision, described on the following page.

Process and Procedure:
Developing and Articulating a Vision

Purpose

- To understand the qualities of high-performing, high-poverty schools and their core beliefs.

- To initiate a process of articulating the staff's beliefs about their students.

- To compare the similarities and differences between your school and high-performing, high-poverty schools.

Materials Needed

- Paper and markers

- Copies of Core Beliefs of High Poverty, High-Performing Schools (from p. 20)

Steps

1. Introduce the activity by asking your staff to think about what beliefs they hold about their students' abilities, skills, dispositions, level of performance, and family background.

2. Draw a circle on chart paper and label it "Our beliefs about our students."

3. Ask the staff to write at least three responses on sticky notes and post them on the circle.

4. Draw a second circle and label it "What research says about high-poverty students in high-achieving schools." Distribute copies of Core Beliefs of High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools.

5. Ask the staff to write at least three responses on sticky notes and post them on the circle.

6. Cluster all the responses that belong in one category.

7. Ask your staff to compare both charts and identify similarities and differences.

8. Draw a third circle and label it "What we want to believe about our students."

9. This time, ask each person to write the one belief he or she considers most important and post it on the chart. Cluster all the responses that are similar. Repeat the process until you have constructed a list of five beliefs that are different.

Self-Reflection Questions on the
Process and Procedure for Developing and Articulating a Vision

1. What surprising discovery did you make about your own beliefs and those of your colleagues?

2. What similarities and differences did you find between the research findings and your beliefs?

3. What would you need to do to help the school further develop and maintain the beliefs derived during the activity under "What we want to believe about our students"?

Additional Resources on Cultural Proficiency and Closing the Achievement Gaps

- *The culturally proficient school: An implementation guide for school leaders*, by R.B. Lindsey, L.M. Roberts, and F. Campbell-Jones. (2005). Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

  Devised primarily for principals, assistant principals, and other top school educators, this book combines theory with practical exercises, tools, and resources. It includes the following:

  - Reflective activities for individuals or groups

  - Sample conversations around issues of diversity, multiculturalism, equity entitlement, and racism

  - Typical behaviors associated with culturally proficient leadership organized around the responsibilities of school leaders

  - Professional development activities

- *Disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education: Measuring the problem.* By M.J. Coutinho and D.P. Oswald. (2004). National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, Denver, CO. Available online at www.nccrest.org/Briefs/students_in_SPED_Brief.pdf

  This resource provides a review of the various methods for calculating disproportionality.

Study Group Activity

In a formal or informal study group, mentoring, or coaching group, review the items listed under "Don't Even Think About Developing and Articulating a Shared Vision Unless, as the Principal, You Have Taken the Time" (p. 22).

Discuss the progress of each group participant in understanding, assessing, identifying, and developing personal and school-level visions and beliefs. Share the challenges in making progress in these areas, and what has determined (or will determine) your readiness and the staff's readiness to develop and articulate a shared vision.

My Personal Plan

Does my school have a shared plan?

What is my plan for developing and maintaining a shared plan? Whom will I involve? How will I involve them?

Additional notes:

Using Data Effectively

Primary leadership standard addressed: Using data effectively.
Secondary leadership standards addressed: Strategic decision making and
implementation; Communicating effectively and honestly with staff, students, and
community members.

The prolific discussion about using data to make decisions, commonly known as data-driven decision making, surged with the passing of the NCLB Act, which requires schools to report annual performance for all students by race, ethnicity, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and English language learners. The law makes schools accountable for ensuring all groups are meeting annual performance targets.

For some schools, the NCLB-required disaggregated data reveal achievement gaps between student groups and force principals and teachers to explore why the learning needs of ***all*** students are not being met. Consequently, there has been a greater push to dig deeper into the data, to look at multiple sources of data, and to use the results of the data analysis to determine the needed changes and implement those changes.

The Importance of Data

Data can:

- Replace hunches and hypotheses with facts concerning what changes are needed.

- Facilitate a clear understanding of where the school is and where the school wants to be.

- Identify clear causes of these gaps (achievement or other), so the school can solve the problem and not just treat the symptoms.

- Provide information to eliminate ineffective practices.

- Ensure the effective and efficient use of dollars.

- Show if school goals and objectives are being accomplished.

- Predict and prevent failures, and predict and ensure successes. (Bernhardt, 1998)

Conditions for Effective Data Use

Case studies conducted by the Education Commission of the States between 2000 and 2001 in six districts and 13 schools throughout five states (California, Colorado, Iowa, Maryland, and Texas) found the following factors, conditions, and policies necessary to support data-driven decision making and school improvement:

- Principals expect teachers to meet regularly to review their students' achievement data and to use data within the school.

- Processes for analyzing and disaggregating data quickly are established.

- Others in the school beyond the principal take responsibility for managing the collection and use of data. Typically, these are teachers with content skills in math or English/language arts.

- School improvement teams or study groups composed of teachers and other school staff develop a data-driven school improvement plan.

- Days are rearranged to allow for more professional development time so that teachers can plan curriculum, analyze data, and hold school improvement team meetings and subject or grade-level team meetings. (Armstrong & Anthes, 2001)

In the most successful schools involved in the study, when staff compared student achievement results with demographically similar schools that "beat the odds," the staff attitude began to transform from one that blamed low student achievement on family poverty to one that believed that all students can learn. The picture of practice that follows is a real-life example of how data-driven decision making in an Indiana school corporation resulted in improved student achievement (1995–2005).

Picture of Practice:
The Role of School Administrator in School Improvement

The Pike County School Corporation, a rural district in Petersburg, Indiana, with approximately 2,100 students, has specific challenges: The corporation is not a wealthy one, having a history of low expenditures per student with nearly 40 percent of its students receiving free or reduced-price lunches. Historically, the corporation also has had a higher-than-state-average percentage of special education students in its student body.

Leadership Task

In 1995, the Pike County schools were some of the lowest performing in southwest Indiana in terms of academic achievement. Even though Pike County elementary schools were somewhat competitive with surrounding schools, Pike Central High School ranked 29th or 30th out of 33 high schools the area. This poor performance came at a time when state legislation was being put into place that would require all high school students to pass a standardized test at Grade 10 before receiving a diploma. This test became known as the Graduation Qualifying Exam, or the GQE.

Challenges

The Pike County School Corporation (PCSC) faced several challenges during this period. First, it did not have a substantial cash balance, and there were few funds available from private and state sources to support professional development opportunities for teachers and instructional staff. Furthermore, Indiana was in the process of developing new academic standards for all subjects and all grades. Pike County's experienced faculty, which had seen school reform come and go through the years, was not eager to change its teaching practices to meet new and more demanding expectations from the Indiana Department of Education.

Addressing the Challenges

Members of the PCSC administrative team developed a strategy to address the challenges presented by a rapidly changing educational landscape. First, they adopted a "can-do" attitude, even though they knew the task would be difficult. Pike County principals began to set high expectations for all in their buildings: teachers, instructional aides, and maintenance and cafeteria staff. Teachers were asked to focus on Indiana's new academic standards, what they were, and how they should be properly taught to their students. To get the whole staff on board, the curriculum director at Pike Central High School, used the data. He took the achievement scores to each teacher and showed him or her how poorly Pike Central students were achieving.

The school corporation was aggressive in obtaining professional development funding for use to help teachers become better acquainted with the new state academic standards. Time was made available for teachers to attend workshops, invite on-site educational

consultants to model new teaching methods, and for constructing quarterly academic benchmark and curriculum maps, as well as quarterly assessments in Grades K–10. Teacher planning time was reorganized to facilitate weekly grade-level meetings that allowed teachers to jointly review student work.

For students lagging behind in their studies, IEPs were developed. A bank of computers and Skills Bank remedial software were acquired to help deliver individualized remedial activities and track student improvement. With these, a tutor lab was established, and two aides were hired to work in this lab. On worked primarily with the computer software, and the other was an elementary certified teacher with an understanding of a broad range of subjects (from social studies to science and language arts to mathematics). During this period, the PCSC team was successful in fully integrating computer technology into instruction and assessment practices.

Looking at data, this time from the Terra Nova standardized achievement tests that students took on entering ninth grade, Pike Central determined which students would be eligible for this extra help. If these data or a student's classroom teachers indicated that a student was struggling in some area or skill, the student was pulled from class to the tutor lab for specific remedial work. Lab records of student achievement were communicated regularly to the classroom teachers of the tutored students, not only to help them gauge student progress but also to ensure that what was being tutored was consistent with what was being taught in the regular class. The school corporation wanted catching up, not permanent remediation. And, it worked.

Partnerships were signed with nearby organizations that provided top-notch professional development programs for teachers and instructional staff. Teachers were encouraged to attend workshops staged by the Indiana Department of Education, the Southern Indiana Education Center, nearby colleges and universities, and various private educational organizations. Innovative strategies reviewed during these sessions included: Six-Traits Writing Assessment, Four-Block Language Arts Instruction, Ruby Payne's Poverty in the Classroom, and school-to-work teacher-in-business internships.

Since 2004, Pike's superintendent has instituted a program aimed at developing student motivation and an awareness of the importance of doing well on the annual ISTEP+ exam. His new program includes a "pep talk" to students at each school and grade level prior to the taking of ISTEP+ each September, and an earned Day of Celebration for schools and grade levels achieving higher-than-state-average performance, which is conducted the following spring semester.

An active preschool and extended-day kindergarten program, funded by Title I dollars, has helped students become "program ready" for first grade. This program has had a significant impact on elementary school student achievement since the early 1990s.

Academic Results

The results of these efforts have been short of amazing. Test scores immediately began to rise. In the September 2000 issue of *Offspring Magazine*, a parenting publication from the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*, the PCSC was ranked in the top 100 of 17,000 school corporations nationwide. This award matched low expenditures per student with high student achievement.

From 1999 to 2002, scores took a slight dip; however, since that time, growth has trended steadily upward, as shown in Table 2. In addition, in February 2006, Pike County was the only school corporation in Indiana to be named a Top Gainer School District by the Indiana Student Achievement Institute in Indianapolis.

Table 2. Pike County School Corporation:
Percent Increase in ISTEP+ Mathematics and Language Arts Scores, 2002–05

Grade	Mathematics % Passing		Increase	Language Arts % Passing		Increase
	2002	2005		2002	2005	
3	61%	84%	+38%	76%	88%	+16%
4	62%	75%	+21%	82%	74%	-15%
5	67%	87%	+15%	72%	81%	+13%
6	52%	81%	+56%	70%	77%	+10%
7	57%	62%	+11%	72%	74%	+3%
8	53%	75%	+42%	59%	63%	+7%
9	72%	72%	No change	70%	70%	No change
10 (GQE*)	59%	74%	+25%	64%	73%	+14%
Average			+26%			+6%

* GQE = Graduation Qualifying Exam

According to Dr. Michael L. Harding, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, "I've been employed by the district for nearly 13 years. In my mind, there are two major reasons Pike County has had this kind of success. First, we have an excellent group of teachers. They are extremely dedicated and want only the very best for their students. They go beyond what is expected, and they know that, in many cases, the local school corporation and the education provided may be the only hope for some students of a good life after they graduate from high school.

"While our administrative team may disagree with our teachers from time to time on what we should do," Dr. Harding says, "we agree that all of our students have the ability to learn, and that it is our responsibility to listen to one another, and to be flexible in our thoughts and actions. To be successful, we must act as a team, a K through Grade 12 team!"

Dr. Harding believes the school corporation is more data driven than ever before. "Without a doubt, our commitment to look at all kinds of data, and to use data as irrefutable evidence for change, has helped us become more methodical about our plans and actions. We are more attentive to student needs than ever before. Our partnership with the Indiana Student Achievement Institute [INSAI] has been very productive. Having a third-party organization such as INSAI help guide our efforts to improve our schools and student performance, has helped us become one of the better school systems in Indiana, and the country. This is something of which we are all very proud."

For more information, visit **www.pcsc.k12.inus**.

Clearly, the use of data is important in continuous improvement planning and implementation that support student learning. To be effective in collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and using the results of data, the most critical role for the principal is to facilitate these endeavors by providing teachers the necessary support structures, including:

- Leading by example.

- Communicating the data analysis results to the school staff and in concert with the staff.

- Making data-driven decisions that will positively impact teaching effectiveness and student learning.

Implementing a Data-Driven Culture

To begin creating a data-driven culture, you must:

- Consider the following questions:

  - What data are available to my staff?

  - What data are used by my staff? How are these data used (to inform what)?

  - What data needs to be gathered? By whom?

  - What barriers exist to using data?

  - What processes or mechanisms exist to facilitate the use of data?

  - What support structures are necessary to encourage the use of data by teachers?

- Gauge staff's readiness. Prior to introducing any school-level changes around the use of data, it is important to gauge the staff's readiness to embrace a data-driven school culture. Preliminary responses to the questions above can help determine the current school staff comfort level in using data, the extent of data used, and ways in which data are used. Typically, barriers to data use include lack of training or perceived lack of training, and perceived minimal value for the use of data.

Staff Meeting Activity

Preparation

1. *Post the following guiding questions at the front of the staff room:*

   - *Where is this school compared to other schools in our neighborhood, our corporation, and our state?*

   - *Where would we like our school to be?*

2. *Locate the school report card on the Web and study the information it provides.*
   For example: http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/SEARCH/

3. *Select the charts that seem most relevant to you and your staff, which may include achievement data charts showing disaggregated data.*

Activity

1. *Ask staff members to form groups of three or four.*

2. *Ask each group to prepare responses to the following questions and record their answers on chart paper:*

   - *Based on the information from the school report card, how do we know where we are?*

   - *How are similar schools doing compared to us?*

   - *What are we doing well and what should we do better?*

   - *What other data do we need to assess our school?*

3. *Ask the groups to post their answers and one member to share the answers with the whole group.*

Conclusion

1. *Summarize ideas across groups.*

2. *Ask your staff to continue thinking about the guiding questions for this activity and to view it as an ongoing exercise to be continued through the next faculty meetings.*

Data Tools and Resources

Using Data
School Improvement through Data-Driven Decision Making website
www.ncrel.org/datause/

Using State Data to Inform School Improvement Planning
www.mdk12.org/data/course/module2.html

Understanding How Principals Use Data in a New Environment of Accountability
www.mcrel.org/topics/productDetail.asp?productID=189

State Data
Indiana Accountability System for Academic Progress: School Data
www.doe.state.in.us/asap/data.html

IDEAnet: School Data
ideanet.doe.state.in.us/htmls/education.html

National Data
Indiana Annual State Report Card: National Assessment Information
www.doe.state.in.us/asap/reportcard2002/03.html

Other
Guide to Using Data in School Improvement Efforts
www.ncrel.org/datause/howto/guidebook.pdf

Data Use: Data Resources
www.ncrel.org/datause/resources.php

Study Group Activity

In a formal or informal study group, mentoring, or coaching group, review the items listed under Implementing a Data-Driven Culture (p. 37). Discuss the progress of each participant in assessing the readiness of school staff to become a data-driven school. Share tools, processes, procedures, strategies, and actions that helped facilitate the move toward a data-driven school.

Self-Reflection Questions on Using Data Effectively

1. How are teacher assignments determined in your school? Are new teachers evenly spread out across the school, or are they clustered in certain areas?

2. How is information about how students are performing in your school shared with the teaching staff?

3. Thinking about the students assigned to special education in your school for learning disabilities, is the use of tutor labs or additional help for these students—who may be struggling in an area or skill—a viable alternative to special education?

How do I use data to inform decisions about instruction and curriculum? What data do I use the most? What data do I use the least that I think I should use more often?

How do teachers and other school staff use data to inform their instructional practice and address student needs?

Does my school have a data-driven culture? How can my school develop a culture that is more data driven?

Additional notes:

Engaging Staff in High-Quality Professional Development

Primary leadership standard addressed: Providing high-quality professional growth opportunities to staff.

Secondary leadership standards addressed: Creating learning communities; Engaging all members of the staff; Using data effectively; Strategic decision making and implementation.

Instructional leaders who effectively lead professional development within their school know to ask the following questions: What is high-quality professional development? How do you choose it or design it? How do you know it is working? How do you sustain professional growth? (NCLB Implementation Center, 2006)

Professional development for teachers allows them to remain knowledgeable of the most current practices. Current research interprets professional development as effective when it leads to desirable changes in teaching practices.

Core features of professional development include:

- **Form:** Was the activity presented as a "reform" activity (study group or network) or as a traditional workshop or conference?

- **Duration:** How many hours did participants spend on the activity and over what span of time did the activity take place?

- **Participation:** Did groups from the same school, department, or grade level participate collectively, or did teachers from different schools participate individually?

- **Content focus:** To what degree did the activity focus on improving and deepening teachers' content knowledge?

- **Opportunity for active learning:** What opportunities did teachers have to become actively engaged in a meaningful analysis of teaching and learning?

- **Coherence:** Did the activity encourage continued professional communication among teachers, and was the content in alignment with state standards and assessments? (Garet, Birman, Porter, Desimone, & Herman, 1999)

Research Note!

Content-focused and actively engaging professional development activities (e.g., reviewing student work, obtaining feedback from other teachers) are best delivered in a study group (e.g., professional learning community)—as opposed to the traditional conference or workshop. When such activities are delivered this way for an expanded time, and they require the collective participation of groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level, these professional development activities promote coherence between teachers, the group's goals, and the state's goals.

Supporting the research base for high-quality professional development are national policies and standards.

Federal and State Policy

In the NCLB Act, states and local education agencies are asked to "elevate the quality of instruction by providing staff with substantial opportunities for professional development" (NCLB, 2002, Title I, Sec 1001 [10]). The law goes even further by insisting on high-quality, ongoing professional development for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals (NCLB, 2002, Title I, Sec 1114). At the local level, the state of Indiana requires a professional development program in the school improvement plan. The Indiana Department of Education specifies that the professional development program is to be "aligned with local data and focuses on assisting teachers in meeting the identified needs of a diverse and ever-changing student population" (Indiana Department of Education, 2004a). Therefore, the emphasis should be student learning and performance. Each school's professional development program must be approved by the State Board of Education, which uses the state's core principles (see pp. 46–47) for professional development as part of the approval criteria.

Guidelines for Effective Practice

To move from research and policy to practice, professional educators through the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) developed the following standards for quality staff development:

- **Leadership.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.

- **Resources.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

- **Data driven.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

- **Evaluation.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.

- **Research based.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision making.

- **Designs and strategies.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.

- **Learning.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change.

- **Collaboration skills.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

- **Equity.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.

- **Quality teaching.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.

- **Family involvement.** Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (NSDC, 2001)

The U.S. Department of Education's Professional Development Team has identified 10 principles of high-quality professional development to serve as guidelines for professional development providers and recipients. These guidelines come from a rigorous examination of models of professional development programs in schools and districts across the country. High-quality professional development:

- Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community.

- Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement.

- Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community.

- Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership.

- Enables teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards.

- Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools.

- Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development.

- Requires substantial time and other resources.

- Is driven by a coherent long-term plan.

- Is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts. (Peixotto & Fager, 1998)

As mentioned, the state of Indiana has established the following core principles of professional development:

- Professional development programs will address issues that are relevant to the priorities of education improvement and reflect the knowledge base of the profession by doing the following:

  - Reflecting research-based approaches to effective adult learning, student learning, and organizational change to support ongoing developmental activities. While tapping educators' life experiences and drawing on the knowledge base from effective research, a variety of modes of learning are used to foster self-directed professional development opportunities.

  - Integrating education improvement priorities. Consistent and continuous links are made with the school improvement plan, the Indiana Professional Standards Board, and the Indiana State Board of Education policy.

  - Incorporating both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching, assessment, and preparation for the world of work. Professional growth experiences enhance educators' knowledge within and across subject areas and their ability to foster and assess students' problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

  - Including explicit strategies for setting high expectations and meeting the diverse learning needs of all students. Training activities increase educators' capacity to implement developmentally appropriate practices to establish challenging learning goals and respond to the uniqueness of each student.

  - Receiving adequate resources. Every public school in Indiana must receive the financial resources and support services needed to provide the most effective professional development program, as described within these principles.

- Professional development programs will engage educators in an effective learning process that impacts practice by doing the following:

  - Actively involving participants in program design, delivery, and implementation. Professional growth opportunities reflect educators' needs as determined from multiple data sources grounded in and linked with the school improvement plan. All stakeholders shall be engaged in meaningful job-embedded opportunities to effectively support practice that leads to improved student learning.

  - Promoting multiple strategies that model recommended strategies. Opportunities for professional development incorporate varied approaches, such as theory, demonstration, reflection, practice, mentoring, technology applications, and peer dialogue and coaching.

  - Incorporating follow-up activities that are sustained over time and provide educators with ongoing feedback. The professional development program provides a range of opportunities for staff to integrate the new strategies into their work with children through practice, feedback, and reflection.

- Continuously evaluating impact on educators' practice and student learning. The effectiveness of professional development is determined by its impact on staff performance and student learning.

- Professional development programs will contribute to developing an environment that support educators' professional growth by doing the following:

  - Fostering collegiality and collaboration. Professional growth opportunities encourage staff to build a community of educators, parents, business, and community partners who exchange ideas for innovation, cooperate in developing curricula, and discuss approaches to strengthening student learning by focusing on the school community as a culture of inquiry.

  - Building capacity through a continuum of ongoing improvement activities. Professional development activities maintain a focus on the improvement of practices that increase student learning and link to the school improvement plan and the standards developed by the Indiana Professional Standards Board, and the Indiana State Board of Education policy.

  - Integrating staff development into educators' practice. The professional development program incorporates supports for staff to implement newly acquired strategies and assess them for their impact on student learning.

  - Encouraging innovation and risk-taking. As a result of staff development activities, the school community recognizes the need for action research which assists educators, leading toward innovations improving student learning. (Indiana Department of Education, 2004b)

The following picture of practice is an example of the challenges principals can face in assessing the professional developmment needs of the staff.

Picture of Practice:
Assessing Professional Development Needs

After a series of workshops during the summer leadership institute at his school corporation, Mr. Murray came to a new position at Rolling Hills Middle School in rural Indiana. He was energized and genuinely inspired by many examples of successful experiences shared at the workshops he had attended.

From his summer leadership institute, he had brought many lessons focused on supporting teachers' growth and helping teachers develop as professionals. At one of the workshops, he had seen how a small community had been supporting students' writing by simply becoming the audience for their poetry readings. Having parents and local business owners read and provide feedback to students on different writing tasks had turned things around in this school community. Another presenter had shown how a community was involved in a project aimed at learning about the protection of its watersheds. There were so many interesting and exciting ways to approach innovative practice. Pen pals overseas, technology in the classroom, book clubs—all these great ideas could bolster teachers' excitement and, in turn, translate into students' positive dispositions towards learning.

Leadership Task

Still an outsider to his new school, Mr. Murray had limited information about the kinds of professional development programs his teachers had attended under his predecessor. However, he knew that his students were barely meeting AYP in mathematics and language arts, and his teachers were in need of what he began to call an "academic jolt." His students needed engagement in the subjects taught. His staff needed more ideas, new projects, and innovative practice that would grab students' attention. As a new principal, he was eager to try out some powerful ideas and transform this school into an exemplary community, a model of academic success and staff involvement.

When Mr. Murray returned to his school setting, he felt ready to launch a comprehensive professional development initiative that would engage everyone in his staff. Aware of his budget limitations, he made a list of the top 10 projects he had liked the most, and then engaged his staff in conversations about which would fit their needs. His goal was to focus on five priority projects. He was hoping to get his staff's buy-in by going through a process in which they would be able to voice their opinion and vote on the projects that made the most sense to them. He called a staff meeting and, after sharing his summer institute experience, Mr. Murray listed 10 different themes as possible areas for further professional development. He asked teachers to select their top five from the following:

- Using new technologies in the classroom (i.e. hand-held electronics)
- Engaging community members as an audience for students' writing
- Pen pals on the Web
- Book circles

- Engaging students and parents through community service

- Mathematics club

- Arts in the mathematics classroom

- Action research

- Creating formative assessments

- Professional learning communities

Challenges

Interestingly, Mr. Murray found his first attempts to introduce some of his ideas to be mildly successful. His enthusiasm was received with a range of responses from polite consent to open resistance. To his surprise, instead of energizing the staff, the wealth of ideas he had for his staff seemed to create a sense of overwhelming confusion.

While going down Mr. Murray's list of "innovative ideas for an academic jolt," one of the language arts teachers expressed a clear sense of frustration: "New technology—been there done that. Pen pals, we tried and it didn't work. Engaging parents—you all know how hard we've tried. We've done all the things he mentioned, except for action research. What is that anyway? Why doesn't he tell us what he wants, and we will do it?"

By contrast, another teacher in a group expressed her opinion: "I really want to try the community involvement idea. My students are just relying on me as an audience for their writing. This sounds awesome. I want to learn more about it."

One of the math teachers jumped in: "Community involvement in math? Hmm…that is truly innovative! First I need to educate the community, and I really don't know if that is going to make a difference to my students."

A foreign language teacher asked: "What about my 'alien' project? I love doing that. Does this mean I can't do it anymore?"

Overcoming Challenges

Soon enough, Mr. Murray realized that his staff's diverse opinions about his initiatives were not necessarily motivating. Just getting them engaged in voicing their opinion about different options for professional development would not translate into an informed decision. More than his staff's vote on a list of "good" ideas, Mr. Murray needed to develop a coherent program with clear goals. Instead of offering a list of projects to his staff, what he needed was a focus and a clear sense of outcomes and expectations aimed at specific learning needs of his students.

Self-Reflection Questions

In developing an action plan for professional development have you considered the following?

- As a school community:
    - Who are you?
    - What are you trying to accomplish?
    - How will your professional development program support the school improvement plans?

- What are some roadblocks to successful design and implementation of professional development?

- Who are your key players? How would you engage your staff members in identifying the professional development approaches they need?

- Where can you find guidelines to select research-based successful professional development programs?

High-Quality Professional Development in Practice

Taking the research, policies, and standards supporting high-quality professional development into the classroom does not necessarily mean looking outside the school for professional development opportunities. Look for opportunities for professional learning and growth internally through job-embedded professional development. The National Staff Development Council defines job-embedded professional development as:

> learning that occurs as teachers and administrators engage in their daily work activities. Job-embedded learning is the result of educators sharing what they have learned from their teaching experiences, reflecting on specific work experiences to uncover new understanding, and listening to colleagues share best practices they have discovered while trying out new programs or planning and implementing a project. (Wood & McQuarrie, 1999)

Job-embedded professional development is learning by doing, reflecting on the experience, and then generating and sharing new insights and learning with others. Examples of job-embedded professional development include study groups, action research, mentoring, and coaching. However, almost any interaction between two or more educators provides an opportunity for job-embedded professional development. Both formal activities designed to promote job-embedded professional development and the informal interactions within a school can be employed to promote important professional learning.

Study Group Activity

In a formal or informal study group, mentoring, or coaching group, discuss how each participant has established a professional development program that engages teachers in their own learning process to delegate responsibility so that they take charge of their own learning experiences. How has each principal supported and established collaborative teacher teams that focus on different activities: study groups that look at specific lessons (Lesson Study), critical friends groups that examine different issues of practice, and reading circles that focus on a book of their choice?

Protocol for Examining Student Work

The primary use for the tuning protocol, developed by David Allen and Joe McDonald at the Coalition of Essential Schools, was to look more closely at student exhibitions. However, this protocol has been adapted in different settings to fulfill a variety of purposes wherever colleagues gather to look at problems of practice. Two qualities of this protocol make it particularly helpful as a learning tool that fosters collegial and respectful dialogue around learning about teaching and learning about learners. One characteristic feature of this protocol is that it separates presentation from response. The second is that it distinguishes between "cool" and "warm" feedback (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2003). The main steps of this protocol are outlined below. Unless otherwise noted, time allotments indicated are the suggested minimum for each task.

The Tuning Protocol: A Process for Reflection on Teacher and Student Work

Introduction [10 minutes]
Facilitator briefly introduces protocol goals, norms, and agenda. Participants briefly introduce themselves.

Teacher Presentation [20 minutes]
Presenter describes the context for their work (i.e., common assessments) and presents samples of student work (such as photocopied pieces of written work).

Clarifying Questions [5 minutes maximum]
Facilitator judges if questions more properly belong as "warm" or "cool" feedback than as clarifiers.

Pause to reflect on warm and cool feedback [2–3 minutes maximum]
Participants make note of warm, supportive feedback and cool, more distanced comments (generally no more than one of each).

Warm and Cool Feedback [15 minutes]
Among themselves, participants share responses to the work and its context; teacher presenter is silent. Facilitator may lend focus by reminding participants of an area of emphasis supplied by teacher presenter.

Reflection / Response [15 minutes]
Teacher presenter reflects on and responds to those comments or questions he or she chooses to. Participants are silent. Facilitator may clarify or lend focus.

Debrief *[10 minutes]*
Beginning with the teacher presenter (how did the protocol experience compare with what you expected?), the group discusses any frustrations, misunderstandings, or positive reactions participants have experienced. More general discussion of the tuning protocol may develop.

Source: Coalition of Essential Schools, Oakland, CA (http://www.essentialschools.org). Used with permission.

Additional Resources on Professional Development

Online Resources
Lesson Study
www.tc.edu/lessonstudy/index.html

Critical Friends Groups
www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin136.shtml

Study Groups
www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/profdevl/pd2study.htm

Critical Friends Groups
www.essentialschools.org/

Blueprints website
www.learningpt.org/msc/bp/index.html

Education Trust
www.edtrust.org

Print Resources
Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement (pp. 137–140)*,* by R. DuFour and R. Eaker. (1998). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA.

Successful School Restructuring: A Report to the Public and Educators by the Center for Restructuring Schools, by F. Newmann and G. Wehlage. (1995). University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.

My Personal Plan

What data can I use and share with my staff to inform our understanding of teachers' professional development needs that, if fulfilled, will help meet students learning goals, expectations, and deficiencies?

How can the school vision support collaborative teams?

What is my plan to move away from a group of professional development ideas and toward a coherent professional development plan?

How will I know if the plan is meeting the needs of my teachers and students?

Developing and Sustaining Professional Learning Communities

Primary leadership standard addressed: Creating a culture of learning.
Secondary leadership standards addressed: Engaging all staff; Using data effectively; Understanding curriculum and instruction; Providing high-quality professional growth opportunities to staff.

In the context of schools, when we think of learning, we often focus on students. However, this short-sighted approach overlooks a key element of a successful learning environment: A school needs to be a place where all parties see themselves as learners. In *Making Schools Work*, William Ouchi (2003) indicates that a school where everyone is a learner is important to the success of improving student achievement.

> ### *School = Community of Learners*
>
> ### *Community of Learners = Principal, teaching staff, nonteaching staff, and students*

This culture of learning works to build and sustain leadership for continuous improvement. Such a culture of learning can be sustained only by establishing professional learning communities with a shared mission, vision, and values.

What Is a Professional Learning Community?

Professional learning communities support teachers' and principals' roles as learners. In addition, the ability to exchange ideas with peers is an important feature of professional learning communities. Professional learning communities need to practice collective inquiry, structure collaborative teams, take action, promote experimentation, focus on improvement and assess results (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Collaboration with peers and the reduction of professional isolation are major benefits of professional development programs and sustaining leadership in the school (Fink & Resnick, 2006; Howley, Chadwick, & Howley, 2002). Collaboration, school-based improvement, and voluntary participation are important conditions for success.

Teachers and Principals as Learners

If a school is to become a community of learners, the principal and teachers must begin to think of professional growth not just in terms of workshops removed from their classrooms but as daily habits in the practice of teaching.

In schools where professional learning communities are effectively established, teachers engage regularly in activities leading toward in-depth studies of teaching and learning. These activities include:

- Working together in teams to design curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

- Working together in teams to analyze data that measure student achievement.

- Forming study groups to read, reflect upon, and discuss ideas presented in professional literature.

- Peer coaching as a valued component of the school culture of learning.

The principal has a central role in establishing professional learning communities by identifying and providing resources that support the necessary elements of a professional learning community. These elements include the following:

- A shared mission, vision, values, and goals

- Opportunities for teaching staff to participate in collaborative teams focused on *learning*

- Establishing partnerships with parents

- Decision making based on research

- Decision making based on data

- Practice of collective and individual inquiry into "best practice"

- Commitment to continuous improvement and resource allocation (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004)

Principal as Supporter and Learner

How does a principal create a professional learning community? In *What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do,* the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2005) suggests that principals can successfully support a culture of learning by:

- Providing time for reflection of practices and opportunities to work, plan, and think together.

  "School leaders created opportunities for teachers to work, plan, and learn together around instructional issues. Time was structured to ensure that collaboration around instructional issues become an important part of the school day and the school week." (Johnson & Asera, 1999)

- Investing in teacher learning.

  Data analysis of a longitudinal survey indicated that teachers' self-reports of knowledge, skills, and changes in teaching practices increased over time.

  This supports the finding that professional development that focuses on academic subject matter (content):

  - Gives teachers opportunities for hands-on work (active learning).

  - Is integrated into the daily life of the school (coherence).

  - Is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills. (Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000)

Still, studies have also found that teachers' professional development experiences vary from one year to the next, and teachers within the same school are likely to have different professional development experiences (Porter et al., 2000). Thus, the frequency of an activity and overall school participation warrant consideration in ensuring effective professional development.

- Connecting professional development to school learning goals.

  According to the research, professional development programs tailored to address specific subject-matter content relevant to school improvement needs and what students need to learn have a significant, positive effect on student learning and enhanced teacher knowledge and skills (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Porter et al., 2000).

- Recognizing the need to continually improve his or her own professional practice.

  Developing more effective leaders may depend heavily on creating the conditions in elementary and secondary schools that, by their very structure and operation, encourage leaders to succeed and help them do so. Professional development for principals is very important in the sustaining of leadership, especially distributed leadership. Principal professional development is an effective way to provide knowledge about instruction and to build intellectual and attitudinal commitment to the district's programs and priorities. The goal of these programs is to build in the staff both an interdependent culture of learning and increasing levels of skill in instructional practices. Common themes found in professional development programs include the importance of networking and the value of efforts that bridge the distance among isolated school administrators.

Picture of Practice:
Building and Sustaining a Learning Community

Eastern High School is undergoing a restructuring process intended to replace the traditional high school model with a small school model. Supported by Indianapolis's superintendent, the Board of Education, and the Indianapolis Education Association, this model promotes rigor, relevance, and relationships. The goal is to create small school communities, each with a maximum of 400 students and housed on existing Indianapolis Public High School campuses to improve student retention and achievement.

Leadership Task

At Eastern, Principal Stern believes that successful implementation of the small learning community model depends on the staff's ability to establish professional learning communities, with an emphasis on *learning*. In their small community arrangement, teachers need to build a sense of collegial support in a newly structured organization. Traditionally, the school has operated as most high schools do, with a departmental structure where teachers typically go about their work in isolation.

"This is going to be a different year for us," claims Principal Stern. "Our success hinges on our ability to open ourselves to a truly collaborative learning experience. We are charged with the task of finding new ways of bringing a relevant and rigorous curriculum to our students. We need to think and act together."

Challenges

Principal Stern anticipates a number of implementation challenges, and he is preparing to face a teaching staff already stressed about the growing number of changes that impact the way business runs in traditional high schools.

One of the staff's major challenges is finding relevance in spending time together with colleagues. The teachers appear reluctant to work in learning communities to collaborate with peers. To teachers, this proposal seems far removed from anything they were going to try willingly.

Addressing the Challenges

The issue of building trust among staff members is one of Principal Stern's highest priorities. Trust, he knows, is a requirement to promote a culture where everyone is accepted and all value their role as learners. Therefore, if Eastern is to become successful in implementing job-embedded professional development and supporting learning communities, Principal Stern needs to:

- Give the staff time to develop a culture of trust.

- Allow time to engage in respectful dialogue.

- Give time to develop an interest in valuable collegial conversations.

To this end, Principal Stern devised a strategic implementation plan.

Strategic Implementation Plan

Over the next five years at the job, Principal Stern focused on the following priority areas:

- Finding time for collegial interactions
- Building teams and supporting a trusting environment
- Staff priorities for professional development that includes developing common assessments and examining student work

Benefits of a Professional Learning Community

Professional learning communities take time to establish, and they require additional efforts to sustain them. So, why are they worth such expenditures of time, resources, and effort?

> *As a member of a professional learning community, Foreign Language teacher Sam Hazl says he finds his experience beneficial because it foments both formal and casual conversations that translate into surprising benefits: "We have a professional learning community that focuses on teaching for understanding. Our work is geared toward improving teaching and learning experiences in our classrooms. Even though we focus on teaching, in this professional learning community, we also anticipate and solve problems that would otherwise escalate into big deals. With the level of trust we have developed, we no longer feel defensive when someone raises an issue with a student. We can deal with it ourselves and not appeal to administrators, as we used to do before we built in this kind of collegial support. Learning communities have a spill-over effect. It's like 'the cup runneth over.' "*

The merits of collaboration in professional learning communities are widely recognized. Leeson (2001) indicates the following benefits of collaboration:

- "Collaboration enables the staff to develop a culture of inquiry.

- Collaboration can be linked to remarkable gains in student achievement.

- Collaboration helps teachers develop higher quality solutions to problems and fosters an increase in the likelihood of ownership in the decisions.

- Collaboration increases the confidence among all school community members.

- Collaboration provides teachers with the ability to support one another's strengths and to accommodate their weaknesses.

- Collaboration allows teachers the opportunity to examine and test new ideas, methods, and materials and then expand their own pool of ideas, methods, and materials.

- Collaboration helps reduce the fear of risk-taking by providing encouragement and moral support.

- Collaboration leads to the implementation of research and best practices.

- Collaboration addresses the essential social dimensions of school improvement for teachers who are members of meaningful and purposeful collaborative groups [that] consistently promote collective improvement.

- Collaboration supports the learning needs of adults, for teachers learn best from each other." (pp. 1–2)

Teacher professional learning communities around the country have taken the form of Lesson Study groups, action research groups, book clubs, examining student work groups, and critical friends groups.

Barriers That Can Emerge While Establishing a Professional Learning Community

Many principals have attempted to develop and support professional learning communities in their schools—with limited success. The sustainability of professional learning communities can sometimes be hampered by decisions regarding teachers' opportunities to learn. If time and professional development opportunities are not made available, teachers are likely to view professional learning communities as "another initiative that too shall pass." Limitations to learning opportunities and support structures necessary to sustain such opportunities have a significant impact on school culture. Likewise, the culture determines how teachers seek advancement of their own learning.

Experienced principals have yet another perspective to share. While professional learning communities offer the promise of successful outcomes, the process of establishing professional learning communities needs to build on previous knowledge, and to be carefully paced and nurtured. In the words of a veteran principal, "A professional learning community does not get formed because I thought of it. A professional learning community can only grow out of trusting relationships among teachers, parents, students, and administrators. It is a long process. In some ways it is an ideal, but we can all work toward its construction and its well being. Don't think it is going to happen overnight."

Steps to Creating a Professional Learning Community

Think carefully and prepare the staff by following a scaffold process similar to the one below.

- *Team-building processes to create and support trust building within teams*

- *Pyramid process to build consensus*

- *Protocols to structure and focus conversations around a topic*

---

1. *Decide on the professional development approach and focus.*

2. *Prioritize and help staff to focus on a few areas rather than trying to tackle all the problems at once.*

3. *Begin building trust with teaching staff where all members feel accepted and value their role as learners.*

4. *Institutionalize processes to encourage staff participation in crucial decisions.*

5. *Build consensus.*

6. *Form teams of volunteers.*

7. *Support dialogue among teaching staff and school administrators.*

8. *Have patience and resolve: It takes about three years to establish solid, trusting learning communities (Robbins & Alvy, 2003).*

9. *Allocate the time necessary for the teaching staff to engage in conversations about student learning.*

Don't Even Think About Creating a Learning Community, Unless, as a Principal, You Have:

- Established trust with your staff.

- Allocated time for professional groups to meet.

- Gained support from the teachers union.

- Gained the support of your school leaders.

- Structures in place to help teachers use time effectively and efficiently.

- Had the role of supporter and participant—not evaluator—in professional learning communities.

Process and Procedure:
Establishing a Vision for Professional Development—
A Pyramidal Process

Overview
This Pyramidal Process will enable facilitators to provide the means whereby a number of people can reach a consensus on a vision or mission statement, topic, question, or task. This is very useful when everyone must have ownership in making an important decision or assertion. The group process varies in length according to the complexity of the task and the ease with which each member of the group gives consent. It may not be accomplished in a single session, as some time is needed between sessions for each person to think about various alternatives before coming to a final agreement. Initially, participants come to an understanding of the characteristics of a good final product. Then, each participant writes his own version of whatever is being created. Next, each participant pairs up with another person, and they create a new version agreeable to both. The process continues with pairs joining other pairs, creating another version, and so forth (two, four, eight, sixteen, etc.) until the whole room is one group and a final version, acceptable to everyone, has been completed.

Purposes
The specific purposes of this Pyramidal Process are the following:

- Building consensus

- Starting conversations

- Exploring multiple perspectives

Room Setup:

- Any seating arrangement that enables participants to pair up and then join other pairs, and continue (two, four, eight, sixteen, etc.) until the whole room is one group.

- Center and front facilitator area (for overhead projector, materials, etc.) that is easily visible to all participants.

Materials:

- Easel, chart paper, and different colored markers

- Overhead projector and screen

- Purposes, Process, and Task on transparencies or PowerPoint slides

- Handouts related to specific task, if desired

- Chimes or other noisemakers, if desired

Source of Pyramidal Process: *Blueprints CD-ROM.* (2000). North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Oak Brook, IL. Used with permission of the publisher.

Interactive Process

Before the Session:

- Create a focused statement of the task at hand.

- Set up the room.

During the Session:

- Introduce the content topic and the purposes of this group process:

    - Building consensus

    - Starting conversations

    - Exploring multiple perspectives

- Summarize to the group the consensus-building process.

    Step 1: Ask participants to write their own individual version of what is being created on note paper.

    Step 2: Provide chart paper and markers, and ask participants to pair up with the person next to them, share their individual versions, and come to agreement on one statement/output that satisfies both of them. Record it on the chart paper. It may be helpful to review guidelines for reaching consensus at this stage.

    Step 3: When a pair is finished, prompt them to join another pair and repeat the process until they create another mutually agreed upon statement and record it on chart paper.

    Step 4: Have quads join to create a new consensual statement, and then join again. Groups continue to join until one statement is created with which every participant in the whole group agrees. You may need to prompt pairs or quads to make sure they finish the task in a timely manner (e.g., give a two-minute warning; ask them a question for clarification; or, refocus their thinking on the characteristics of the task).

Consensus Building
Consensus building is normally a process that takes more than one session to complete. At the end of the first session, two or three versions usually will have been generated. To facilitate the reaching of consensus on one version, some time for participants to consider and mull over each of the alternatives may be necessary (a meal break/overnight/several days). At the beginning of the last session, post the alternatives and then share.

- If agreement cannot be reached on alternative versions, you may need to use one or more Tips for Building Consensus (see p. 66).

- You may also want to conduct an impasse settlement activity to resolve the disagreement:

    *Impasse settlement activit*y: The groups in opposition should select one or two representatives, who then sit in a circle of chairs in the middle of the room and

negotiate, while the rest of the participants look on. A spare chair in the center should be available for any observer to temporarily join the negotiations when they have a specific point to make.

Once the final version is reached, print it and give it to all participants. If appropriate, talk about a plan for further action (i.e., get feedback from others).

Tips for Building Consensus

Consensus decision making is a process that requires everyone's participation and is used to ensure that every individual has input when a decision is made. Listening, sharing, and trust are values inherent in the process. Because everyone is involved in the decision and must indicate agreement, the outcome is likely to be accepted by most group members. This whole-group involvement means that the decision is more likely to be implemented and supported by everyone.

Consensus Means…	Consensus Does Not Mean…
▪ All group members contribute. ▪ Everyone's opinions are heard and encouraged. ▪ Differences are viewed as helpful. ▪ Everyone can paraphrase the issue. ▪ Everyone has a chance to express feelings about the issue. ▪ Those who disagree indicate a willingness to experiment for a certain period of time. ▪ All members share the final decision. ▪ All members agree to take responsibility for implementing the final decision.	▪ A unanimous vote. ▪ The result is everyone's first choice. ▪ Everyone agrees. (There may be only enough support for a decision to be carried out.) ▪ Conflict or resistance will be overcome immediately.

Study Group Activity

In a formal or informal study, mentoring, or coaching group, review the NAESP standards (see pp. 57–58) to create a professional learning community. Discuss what each principal in the group is doing or not doing to help support the development of a professional learning community. Share the challenges with providing the needed support, and how some principals have found ways to overcome some of these challenges.

My Personal Plan

What are some team-building processes that my teaching staff and I currently use that work well? What time and opportunities does the staff have to work collaboratively?

My best experience in building consensus with my teaching staff was…

My worst experience in building consensus with my teaching staff was…

I would describe the current level of trust among my staff as….

My plan for establishing and sustaining a community of learners in my school is…

Considerations for Special Student Populations

Primary leadership standard addressed: Strategic decision making and implementation. Secondary leadership standards addressed: Using data effectively; Creating a culture of learning; Understanding curriculum and instruction.

As most educators know, the numbers of students with disabilities and the inclusion of students with disabilities continue to increase on a national level (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005; NCES, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In Indiana for the 2005–06 school year, 194,742 of the 1,007,290 enrolled students (or 19 percent) were identified as students with disabilities (Indiana Department of Education, 2005–2006). Throughout the United States, the areas of disabilities noting the greatest increases are specific learning disabilities and autism (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). With almost one fifth of students in Indiana schools being identified for special education services, principals must become participants in the education of students with disabilities. They must have a basic understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the variety of services and programs, the rights and roles of parents, and the characteristics of teachers who provide high-quality instruction to learners with disabilities.

The number of English language learner (ELL) students nationally was 2 million in 1993–94, and increased by one third to 3 million in 1999–2000 (NCES, 2004). In the 2003–04 school year, ELL services were provided to 3.8 million students (11 percent of all students) (NCES, 2004). The growth in ELL students does not limit itself to urban communities. In 1999–2000, 62 percent of ELL students attended schools with an ELL student population of less than 1 percent. This speaks to the fact the suburban, small-town, and rural schools all now have students for whom English is not their first language.

Rural and small-town communities across the United States find themselves with a new group of residents: families who arrive from other countries, many of whom do not speak English. A quick review of the 2000 U.S. Census shown in Table 3 reveals the changes in demographics (NCES, 2004).

Table 3. U.S. Census Changes

Demographic	1993	2000
Number of students learning English	2,000,000	3,000,000
Percent of student population in Midwest	1.4%	2.6%

For many principals, educating students with disabilities and students whose primary language is not English presents many challenges. Knowing what questions to ask and how to obtain answers to these questions is a good start in addressing the needs of special student populations. These initial questions and answers can provide a baseline understanding of your students with special needs.

Figure 1. Ask and Answer Questions to Determine Changes Needed

1. What is the current state of our population of students with disabilities, our services and programs for them, and the teachers who teach them?	→	2. What is legally required of us and what was promised to the students in their IEPs?	

5. How well are our students with disabilities doing—academically, socially, and emotionally?	3. How does the current state of what we are doing correspond to what is required and what was promised?

4. Based on the answers to these questions, what needs to change?

The following picture of practice (see p. 71) depicts how one principal used the question-and-answer process described above to begin addressing concerns about appropriately educating students with disabilities in her school.

Picture of Practice:
Educating Students With Disabilities

Due to budget cuts, the superintendent has eliminated the position of director of special education. Principals are now in charge of special education in their schools; they are the coordinators. Mrs. Harrison, principal of Creekside Elementary School, is concerned about her new role. While Creekside does not have a large number of students with disabilities (Mrs. Harrison reminds herself that the term *handicapped children* is no longer acceptable), the school does have a total of 30 students with disabilities out of its 280 students in Grades K–5.

Leadership Task

Mrs. Harrison has limited knowledge in this field. Except for sitting in on a few individualized education program (IEP) meetings and attending a workshop here and there, she faces a steep learning curve concerning special education. She has heard from others that the stakes are high—students can be ostracized for being placed in special education classrooms; parents can threaten to sue for inappropriate placement or inadequate services; and classroom teachers may revolt when too many students with disabilities are placed in their classrooms. This new role will require acquiring a great deal of new information and developing an understanding for the concerns and needs of all those involved.

Challenges

Obtaining past and current data concerning students with disabilities will be difficult in some schools. However, much of the information is required by federal law and should be housed in the corporation offices. Gaining access to and organizing the data may prove to be a further challenge, but as the superintendent's secretary is a friend of Mrs. Harrison, she thinks that getting the data will not be a problem. Learning about IDEA is, at first, a daunting task for Mrs. Harrison. Fortunately, numerous resources are available to provide both information and people to assist the newcomer to this field.

As classroom teachers are expected to have more and more students who have disabilities in their classrooms, they are naturally resistant to the time it takes away from their nondisabled students. Similarly, veteran teachers of special education often have grown accustomed to teaching their learners in self-contained classrooms. They may be reluctant to change this classroom style, in part, perhaps due to concern for how their students will bear up under the pressures of a regular classroom.

Addressing the Challenges

In thinking about each question, Mrs. Harrison develops a list of additional questions that relate to the larger one.

What *is* the current state?

- *Who are the students with disabilities at Creekside?* What are their ages and grade levels? What are their disabilities?

- *What services/programs do we provide at Creekside?* What classrooms do we have for special education? What other resources and services? Do we serve low-incidence or high-incidence disabilities? What percentage of students are mainstreamed and for what percentages of their day?

- *Who are the teachers of special education?* Are they highly qualified? If not, are they on track to receive the required certification?

- *Who are the classroom teachers with students with disabilities in their classrooms?* Are they highly qualified? How many students in total do they have and how many students with disabilities? Do they have time to meet and plan with the teachers of special education?

What is *required* and what was *promised*?

- *What is required by the law?* According to IDEA, how are students to be identified? What tests are to be used? How is placement determined? What are the legal rights of parents?

- *What is required by the State of Indiana?* Does state law differ from IDEA? What are the state's reporting requirements?

- *According to the IEPs, what programs, services, and instruction was each child to receive?* Are the promised programs and services being provided (e.g., physical therapy, counseling)? Is the staff highly qualified? Is each student mainstreamed for the promised amount of time?

- *What instructional practices do the classroom teachers use?* Are the practices based on research regarding students with disabilities? Have the teachers received ample training in the practices?

How well does "what is currently happening" correspond to what is *required* and what was *promised*?

- *Have we met all the legal requirements of IDEA and the State of Indiana?*

- *Are we providing each student with the services outlined in his or her IEP?*

- *Are all teachers using research-based instructional strategies with their students with disabilities?*

How well are our students with disabilities *doing*?

- *What percentage of students move out of special education or move to a less restrictive environment?*

- *What percentages of students take the state tests versus the alternative assessments?*

- *What percentage of students passed the ISTEP+?*

What does disaggregation of the special education data show (in terms of the age of the students, the type of disabilities, etc.) for those not passing the state tests?

What needs to **change**?

Self-Reflection Questions

- What are the basics of IDEA? How are students, parents, and teachers provided for in the law? Why is a law needed?

- What is the purpose of the IEP? What is my role in the IEP meeting as the principal? How involved should I be?

Process and Procedure
for Addressing the Leadership Tasks, Challenges, and Dilemmas

Fortunately, the previous director of special education maintained a good data system that will provide Mrs. Harrison with the answers to many of her questions. In addition, the two teachers of special education in her building know many of the answers. But organizing the data still requires time and persistence. Here's how the principal approaches the work:

(1) Forms working groups. Mrs. Harrison forms a working group to organize and analyze the data. The group consists of the two teachers of special education, two classroom teachers, a parent of students with disabilities, and herself. Mrs. Harrison is able to provide a small stipend to the teachers, as the group meets two hours every other week, with one hour being spent on the "off week" completing the assignments to move the work forward.

A classroom teacher, a special education teacher, and Mrs. Harrison work together to address the question, "What is the current state?" To answer their questions, they use a number of resources:

- Student achievement and demographic data, from IDOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/asap/welcome.html)

- Description of services for students with disabilities, from school and corporation policy manuals and websites

- Disability numbers and percentages, percentage of time in inclusion, services provided, from reports summarizing students' IEPs

- Level of quality and experience of special education and classroom teachers, from human resources files, records of professional development attended, and principal classroom instructional observations

A second group, composed of a parent and two teachers, investigates the questions, "What is required and what was promised?" This group uses the following resources:

- Federal (IDEA) and state requirements, from IDEO website, Division of Exceptional Learners
  (www.doe.state.in.us/exceptional/speced/laws.html)
  and from U.S. Department of Education website
  (www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/idea2004.html)

- Legal rights of parents, from IDEO website
  (www.doe.state.in.us/exceptional/speced/dueprocess.html)

- Programs and services promised in the IEPs, from reports summarizing students' IEPs

- Instructional practices for classroom teachers to use with their students with disabilities, from principal classroom instructional observations, from the IDOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/asap/bestpract_specialed.html), and from the U.S. Department of Education website (www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tools/initiative/summerworkshop/walker/index.html)

(2) Forms an advisory group. Realizing that change is more likely to happen when significant numbers of people, as well as key people, are involved in the process, Mrs. Harrison expands the original working group to include one grade-level teacher from each grade, the Title I teacher, and the gym teacher (to represent the noncontent area teachers). To this group was given the task of comparing "what is" with "what is required and was promised" and determining the consistency between the two.

From this group, lists of "what we do well" and "what needs to improve" are developed. For example, all the students are being mainstreamed for the percentage of time as outlined in their IEPs. However, the two students whose first language is Spanish were not given the Spanish version of the test to identify them as learning disabled. While one of the special education teachers meets the highly qualified requirement, the other does not. Most disturbing is that only 2 of the 20 content-area teachers who have students mainstreamed into their classrooms had completed professional development (beyond a one-shot workshop) regarding instructional practices for students with disabilities.

(3) Seeks outside resources. With lists in hand, Mrs. Harrison reserves an afternoon in her office to categorize and sort the findings. Some are minor changes that she will be able to institute herself. Some are related to human resources, such as hiring appropriate staff. The principal is left with a list of about 10 items that she e-mails to her area Regional Resource Center for Special Education (a federally funded center), located in Minneapolis (www.northcentral-rrc.org/). Through two extended phone calls with the staff there, she develops an appropriate plan of action to tackle each needed change.

(4) Provides professional development. During the next month, Mrs. Harrison brings the items to grade-level meetings and all staff meetings. The IDEO Division of Exceptional Learners provides one of its education consultants to explain the IDEA requirements regarding the use of research-based instructional strategies at a staff meeting. Together, the teachers decide that a book study regarding differentiated instruction would be a good place to start. The regional educational service center offers to model differentiated lessons for the next six months and provide feedback as teachers implement the instructional techniques.

(5) Continues to question. While a lot has happened since last summer when Mrs. Harrison learned she had responsibility for the special education program in her school, she also knows that she must continue to ask and answer, "How well are our students with disabilities doing—academically, socially, and emotionally?"

Picture of Practice:
Educating English Language Learners

As principal of the Northwest County School, Mr. Patton has seen a slow but steady increase in the enrollment of students learning English as a second language (ESL) over the past decade. Ten years ago, the first family from northern Mexico moved to the county seat. In the following two years, three other families from the same area of Mexico joined the community. More recently, a local church sponsored three refugee families from Bosnia, whose children witnessed horrible atrocities from war. Thus, the school and its corporation now have a population of 15 English language learners (ELLs) in Grades K–10, some suffering from emotional trauma.

Leadership Task

In a smaller school that is part of a rural corporation, such as Northwest County School, the principal's job includes supervising *all* areas of special services. There are no directors of special education or bilingual education. Mr. Patton finds the tasks awaiting him as the ESL coordinator are numerous and weighty: developing and implementing ESL policy and practices consistent with the law, developing ESL curriculum and assessments, serving as a parent liaison, coordinating ESL instruction and professional development for all teachers, supervising ESL teachers and tutors, and increasing the achievement of students of ESL.

As with many principals, Mr. Patton comes to these tasks with little to no education or experience with learners of English. Except for two years of high school French, the concepts of learning a new language and culture are new to him. In addition, very few if any of his teachers have previously taught non-native speakers of English and are unfamiliar with the students' varied cultures.

Mr. Patton's leadership task begins with a steep learning curve for everyone involved—from the bus drivers to the administrators, requiring his utilization of outside resources and expertise, and most importantly, an ability to create an attitude of acceptance and appreciation for these new students.

Challenges

Mr. Patton's challenges are numerous, with several already mentioned:

- Lack of knowledge of the legal requirements, including NCLB, appropriate curriculum, assessments, and instruction

- Lack of available highly qualified teachers

- No common home language of the students; some speak Spanish and others Bosnian

- Parents who do not speak English; bilingual interpreters not available

- Some community (and possibly teacher) bias and/or prejudice toward those who are assumed to be illegal immigrants

- Stereotypical beliefs of students' inability to achieve (more toward Mexican students than Bosnian students), resulting in lower expectations and lower standards

- Lack of knowledge about the cultures of the students learning English

Addressing the Challenges

As a way to organize the task before him, Mr. Patton devises a list of questions that correspond to his challenges. He believes that if he determines the answers for each question, he will be able to implement a plan of action to methodically address the challenges.

Legal Requirements

- What do the federal and state laws say about educating students who are not native speakers of English?

- Does the law differ if the student is here illegally?

- Where can I get help for legal questions?

Standards, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments

- Are there standards for ESL programs and students? If so, are they at the national or state level, or both?

- Does the state have a written curriculum for ESL? Is the district supposed to have one?

- What are the program models for ESL, especially for corporations with few ESL students? Which programs are proven to be the most effective?

- Are there some instructional practices that work better than others? How can I help my content-area teachers with practices as most of our learners of English are in regular classrooms?

- How do I assess the students when they arrive if they cannot speak English? Are there legal requirements for assessments? What assessments should we be using on a regular basis? Do I need to assess English skills as well as their progress in the content areas?

Teachers: Finding ESL Teachers; Changing Attitudes, Beliefs, and Expectations

- How can I find an ESL teacher? The closest university where we usually get new teachers does not have an endorsement or degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).

- How do I address stereotypes? How can I change teachers' attitudes about certain cultures and groups of students?

- How do I get the teachers to see that we are all "in this together"—that *all* the students are *all* our responsibility?

- How can I help the teachers develop high expectations for the students of English?

Self-Reflection Questions

- Who are the students learning English in your schools? What are their home languages? Did they attend school in their home countries? What level of education do their parents have? What were the parents' professions before moving here? Did the children face trauma in their home countries? Are they refugees or immigrants? Based on the answers to these questions, *who* are our students?

Process and Procedure

In attempting to find the answers to his questions, Mr. Patton discovered many resources on the Web. He also visited the corporation office in a larger town in the next county with a population of 80 ESL students and met with the director of ESL. The director provided invaluable assistance in directing Mr. Patton towards appropriate resources and helping to filter the infinite information on the Web. Some of the information Mr. Patton found the most helpful included the following:

Legal Requirements

- Federal

    - "Secretary Spellings Announces Final Limited English Proficiency Regulations," from U.S. Department of Education website (www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2006/09/09132006a.html)

    - "New No Child Left Behind Regulations: Flexibility and Accountability for Limited English Proficient Students," from U.S. Department of Education website (www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/lepfactsheet.html)

- Specific to Indiana

    - Federal Case Law and Indiana Academic Code, from IDEO website (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/fedcaselaw.html)

    - Guidelines to Satisfy Legal Requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Lau v. Nichols (1974), and Equal Opportunities Act of 1974, from IDOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/pdf/lepguidelines.pdf)

- Related to student enrollment

    - From IDOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/thelaw.html)

Standards, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessments

- English proficiency levels and standards

    - Indiana's English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards, from IDOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/standards.html) (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/pdf/languagelevels.pdf#search='English%20proficiency%20levels')

- Instruction and curriculum

    - Sample individual learning plans (based on proficiency levels), from IDOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/documents.html#2a)

    - Instructional strategies, from IDOE website (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/documents.html#4) (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/pdf/native_language_use.pdf)

- Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol Model (SIOP), from the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
  (www.cal.org/siop/SIOPbrochure.html)
  (www.cal.org/crede/si.htm)

- Assessments

  - English proficiency assessments, from IDOE website
    (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/documents.html#4)
    (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/assessment.html)
    (www.doe.state.in.us/lmmp/langproficiencytestdescript.html)

  - Assessment and accountability, from the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) website
    (www.ncela.gwu.edu/spotlight/3_assessment.html)

Teachers' Attitudes, Beliefs, and Expectations

- Teacher quality, from NCLEA website
  (www.ncela.gwu.edu/spotlight/2_teacherquality.html)

- Teacher education, from CAL website
  (www.cal.org/topics/ell/teacherED.html)

- "Culture in Second-Language Teaching," from CAL website
  (www.cal.org/resources/digest/0309peterson.html)

Through the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Language Minority and Migrant Programs, Mr. Patton requested and received training for classroom teachers on beginning instruction with students learning English. The ideas were quite helpful during those first 30–60 days, when teachers ask "Where do I start?" The division also introduced him to a person at the regional educational service center who has a background in ELL.

Study Group Activity

In a formal or informal study, mentoring, or coaching group, discuss who in the community has had exchange students, often travels outside of the United States, has studied a foreign language in college, or has relatives living in the same country as our students. How might we use them to help in addressing and changing attitudes and beliefs in the community and schools?

My Personal Plan

Who are the students with disabilities in my school? What are their disabilities? What do I know about that disability? How can I learn more?

How well qualified are the teachers of special education in my school? Who could observe and mentor special education teachers? How could the person mentor me in working with the teachers?

How well qualified are the content-area teachers to provide instruction for students with disabilities? Who could observe and mentor teachers to improve instruction for students with disabilities? What can I learn from others to better support teachers in instructing students with disabilities?

How well is my school doing in serving students with disabilities? What three things need to change? What resources can I use to help me institute the change?

My Personal Plan

Who are the English language learners in my school? What languages do they speak? What do I know about their language proficiency and prior schooling?

In my school, what teachers are qualified to teach ELL students? What could I learn about instruction for ELL students from these teachers?

How well qualified are the content-area teachers to provide instruction for ELL students?

What measures is my school taking to ensure that we are adequately serving our ELL students? What three things need to change? What resources can I use to help me institute the change?

The School Manager With an Eye on Instructional Leadership

For the instructional leader, student achievement is front and center of school improvement, and everything else (e.g., the logistics of operating a facility—lights, heat, leaks, breakfasts, lunches, etc.; busing students; scheduling classes, overseeing the legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives; playing to the political interests in and around the community, etc.) becomes *instrumental*, but not the primary focus to achieving school improvement.

This section of the guidebook addresses three areas that are closely associated with effective school management and that positively impact student achievement: establishing school discipline policies and procedures, informing and engaging parents, and managing school finances.

The Importance of Effective School Discipline Policies and Procedures

As mentioned, when principals play an integral part in ensuring that the school staff stay focused on student achievement, it has found to be effective in increasing student learning. An attribute of such effective principals is the ability to establish behavioral standards and policies for students.

Studies have identified a safe and orderly environment as critical to student achievement (Mayer, Mullen, Moore, & Ralph, 2000). Even when controlling for students' background characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, students in schools with high levels of violence had lower math scores by .20 standard deviation and were 5.7 percent less likely to graduate (Grogger, 1997). In *Principals and Student Achievement: What the Research Says*, author Kathleen Cotton (2003) reviews the research literature on principal effectiveness and the influence of principal effectiveness on student achievement. Cotton reports that the research suggests that "the principal's establishment and maintenance of a safe, orderly school environment has been identified as the most fundamental element of effectiveness" (p. 8). Further, Cotton concludes:

> Effective principals ensure that there is broad-based agreement about standards for student behavior, communicating high behavioral standards to students, seeking input from students about behavioral policies, applying rules consistently from day to day and from student to student, delegating disciplinary authority to teachers, and providing in-school suspension accompanied by support for seriously disruptive students. (p. 8)

To support this conclusion, Cotton points to Scheurich's (1998) research on high-achieving schools where the traditional approach to discipline was not the focus; rather, an understanding of the conduct expectations and responsibilities from students and teachers became the focus.

In other words, schoolwide rules and procedures have been established and communicated to students, parents, and teachers for behavioral problems, including the following:

- Bullying

- Verbal harassment

- Drug use

- Obscene language and gestures

- Gang behavior

- Sexual harassment

- Repeated class disruptions

- Disregarding others' safety

- Fighting

- Theft

- Truancy (Marzano, 2003)

Moreover, consequences for violating rules and policies are established and followed consistently. Research shows that the most common actions taken in response to violations of rules and policies include verbal reprimand, disciplinary notices to parents, conferences, afterschool detention, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion. Still, while much more is known about the consequences of violating rules and policies, little is known about their effectiveness. Some researchers and educators alike tend to view these consequences as reactive interventions that omit a key player: the student's voice. They suggest a different approach to establishing a safe and orderly environment, which consists of creating a program that instills and teaches self-discipline and responsibility to students, and has a systemic process for early detection of students who have a high potential for violence and extreme behavior (Marzano, 2003). As one researcher explains:

> Unlike the older, legalistic code models with their heavy-handed authoritarian emphasis on rules and punishment, a modern code of discipline should be developed "bottom up" with collaborative input from students, teachers, support staff, and parents and reviewed frequently for modification. (Larson, 1998)

By including students in the development of the code of disciplines, the regulations are no longer external pressures; they are internal ideas of self-discipline that can invoke the needed motivation to adhere to them, and if not, take responsibility for one's own actions.

The picture of practice that follows shows how one principal dealt with inconsistent and nonexistent rules and policies for behavioral problems.

Picture of Practice

Elmer Elementary School comprises nearly 900 PK through eighth-grade students, and 99 percent of them qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. In its third year of NCLB restructuring, Elmer's population breakdown is 78 percent African American, 18 percent Hispanic, 2 percent Asian, and 1 percent white. Twenty-three percent of students in Grades 3–8 meet state reading standards, and 29 percent meet state math standards according to the most recent testing. Elmer is a neighborhood school located in an impoverished area of a major metropolitan city. Due in part to a large number of recent retirements, almost one third of the teachers are new to the school and have less than two years of teaching experience. Elmer has a new principal. Teachers describe parent involvement as minimal in the primary grades and nonexistent in the middle and upper grades. The school has a past reputation for having a large population of undisciplined, difficult-to-manage students.

Leadership Task

Mr. Adkins, a newly assigned principal at Elmer School, shares the following with his mentor: "In my first few months as principal, I have spent the bulk of my time dealing with the steady stream of students sent to the office for disruptive behavior. A good number are 'repeat offenders' who seem be in the office almost daily. My assistant principal and counselor are finding it difficult to deal with these students in a timely manner. Finding a place for them to sit and wait with supervision creates a problem and takes time away from our mission to improve student achievement.

"I have tried a number of strategies for dealing with the students' apparent misbehavior. I meet with them to discuss what happened. I've tried various consequences for disruptive behavior including no recess or in-school suspension. I call parents and have parents in for conferences almost daily. Sometimes these efforts yield short-term results, but they don't seem to contribute to long-term solutions. The misconduct reports are piling up, and there too few signs of improvement."

Mr. Adkins knows that he needs help. He asks his mentor, "What strategies can you recommend to help us decrease disruptive behavior in the school?"

Challenges

Mr. Adkins's challenges are many, and the first step is to complete a schoolwide management assessment process to understand the management problem that exits.

- Mr. Adkins needs to know how appropriate on-task classroom behavior is being defined, and how this behavior is communicated to students and parents.

- How is outstanding or good classroom behavior being recognized and even rewarded?

- Are schoolwide behavior standards in place—classroom standards, lunchroom standards, playground standards?

- What consequences are assigned to inappropriate behavior?

- Has a discipline pledge or a set of basic school rules been communicated to teachers and students?

- Are any preventive strategies in place to deter or discourage misconduct?

Addressing the Challenges

Mr. Adkins's mentor responds: "You will need to change this situation as soon as possible. I can start you off with a few suggestions, but you will need to establish a schoolwide management committe to design strategies and a plan for establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior in all classrooms so that learning can take place." The mentor offers Mr. Adkins the following guidelines:

- Chart everything. Who are the students? What time in the day do they demonstrate disruptive behavior? How often are they sent to the office? Which teachers are sending students to the office? What instructional practices are these teachers using in the classroom? How do these teachers describe or define their classroom management philosophy, practices, or strategies?

- Once you have collected this data, what strategies will you use to address the problem? How will you communicate the issues to the teachers involved? To the full staff?

- What preventive strategies can be implemented?

- What remediation strategies can be used to improve students' behavior?

Displaying Leadership Qualities

Mr. Adkins is committed to improving student achievement levels and meeting AYP—recognizing that instruction and discipline are "two sides of the same coin." One is not effective without the other. His goal is to become an effective instructional leader at Elmer, which means that he will have to change the current climate of poor discipline.

Mr. Adkins knows that he will need to build capacity in his school by providing teachers opportunity to participate in leadership roles of creating strategies to address the challenges and issues that are in the way of improved student achievement.

Implementation Plan

The persons involved and the process for developing a schoolwide management plan will determine its success level. The process should include the following:

- Establish the team or committee responsible for designing the plan, which will be submitted to the full staff and key stakeholders.

- Conduct an assessment of the current schoolwide discipline process.

- Keep the full staff involved in the process by using some type of communication process throughout the planning stage.

- Include in the plan: (1) philosophical position or approach to addressing discipline issues, (2) statement of purpose and goals, (3) procedures and process for implementing the plan, (4) monitoring and evaluation of the plan.

- Create and implement the schoolwide management plan as a pilot with ways to provide feedback and time allocated for making changes and revisions.

Strategic Planning: Developing a Schoolwide Management Plan

In order for Mr. Adkins to give leadership to the strategic planning process, he will need to guide the team: first, by articulating the need for change and the importance of the management plan. Strategies will need to be identified and created, including implementation dates, who will do what, and the desired outcomes.

The strategic planning steps could include the following:

- Data collection and analysis of behavioral issues

- Assessment of the causes of inappropriate behavior

- Research that identifies management plans or models that are working in similar schools

- Staff development and support in developing strategies and putting strategies into action

- Discussions of how to put more focus on problem solving and less on consequences

- Discussions of how to get students to be reflective on their behavioral issues and to be responsible for their actions

Self-Reflection Questions

- What connections exist between classroom behavior and student achievement?

- Traditional responses to discipline problems have included corporal punishment, detention, suspension, and expulsion. What are some alternatives that will support your goal to hold students accountable for their behavior?

- What are some strategies for getting your full staff to participate in the planning of the management plan and to fully implement the plan?

Benefits of a Schoolwide and Classroom Management Plan

The time and resources that will go into developing a schoolwide management plan will prove to be well spent. An effective way to create change in a school is to implement a team leadership process whereby the principal assigns a team of teachers and other staff to address the issue of discipline and to develop an action plan or management plan for improvement. Besides the benefit of sharing leadership, the schoolwide and classroom management plan also will accomplish the following:

- All teachers and students will be provided with a clear understanding of student-behavior expectations, as defined by the school and community leadership.

- All students will be aware of the plan and its purpose. The plan will be useful because students will know, for example, that they can expect respect from others as they respect others at all times.

- Students will clearly understand the consequences of inappropriate behavior, and all teachers will be expected to adhere to the same set of consequences.

- The procedures for maintaining effective classroom management will be known to all.

- Students will learn to differentiate the behaviors expected in the classroom from behaviors on the playground or in the cafeteria.

- The plan will be customized to address the school's needs, designed by the school's teachers, administrators, and parents; therefore, ownership of the plan will exist.

- The establishment of a data-collection system for monitoring and evaluating the plan will be useful in the process for revising some aspects of the plan.

Suggestions for Establishing a Schoolwide Management Plan and Team

To understand the gravity of the problem of inappropriate behavior in the classroom and its negative impact on the teaching and learning process:

- Identify teachers and students (and other stakeholders) to establish the team for designing a schoolwide and classroom management plan that addresses the problems.

- Clarify the impact that classroom behavior has on student achievement to emphasize that inappropriate behavior inhibits learning.

- Include in the proposed management plan a strategy for widespread dissemination of the plan, including parents and others who work with students.

- Encourage teachers to take responsibility for routine classroom discipline problems.

- Give leadership to the management plan process by including philosophical views to consider, such as student-centered environments that encourage teachers and students to work at building communities in the classroom where everyone is responsible for helping to maintain a learning climate (Kohn, 1996).

- Encourage teachers to be collaborative in their efforts to improve classroom management.

- Consider approaches such as reality therapy, transactional analysis, teacher effectiveness training, assertive discipline, and student team learning.

Study Group Activity

In a formal or informal study, mentoring, or coaching group, discuss the discipline policies and consequences that seem to be working effectively in each principal's school. Consider why these policies are working well (Were students involved early on? Were parents informed in advance?) and the evidence that indicates they are working well. Share each others' current challenges with school discipline, and brainstorm potential solutions.

My Personal Plan

In my school, we have policies and procedures for the following:

- ❑ Bullying
- ❑ Verbal harassment
- ❑ Drug use
- ❑ Obscene language and gestures
- ❑ Gang behavior
- ❑ Sexual harassment
- ❑ Repeated class disruptions
- ❑ Disregarding others' safety
- ❑ Fighting
- ❑ Theft
- ❑ Truancy

In my school, we also have a clear understanding, implementation, and reinforcement of the following:

- ❑ Appropriate and inappropriate classroom behavior
- ❑ Appropriate and inappropriate playground behavior
- ❑ Appropriate and inappropriate lunchroom behavior
- ❑ Appropriate and inappropriate assembly/special-events behavior
- ❑ Appropriate and inappropriate field-trip behavior

Given my responses above, to improve discipline policies and procedures at my school, I need to do the following:

- ❑ Collect data on students who are continually in the office and the teachers who sent these students to the office.
- ❑ Observe implementation of discipline policies by staff.
- ❑ Review communication with parents, staff, and students about discipline.
- ❑ Review security and safety in my school.
- ❑ Collect data on times and days that students seem to be the most disruptive.
- ❑ Establish a schoolwide management team and plan.

Effective Communication: Informing and Engaging Parents

Expert professional development providers have underscored the importance of effective communication between school staff, students, and parents in supporting student learning. School change rests on leaders' ability to communicate effectively on a daily basis. Principals often are called upon to initiate change in their organizations and expected to inform and guide people to modify beliefs and behaviors.

Effective principals routinely—not periodically—communicate with parents and the community, and seek their input. A research study that identified personal attributes, behaviors, and organizational outcomes related to principals' effective school leadership found a correlation between high-achieving schools and parent and community satisfaction (Davis, 1998). For principals in schools with low parent involvement, low community engagement, and low student achievement, this correlation seems to speak to high-achieving schools where parents and the community are much more immersed in their students' education. In other words, the cynic in many of us suggests, and quite frankly, the reality for many principals is, that parents are not involved—be it job commitments or other sociological factors that keep a wall between the school and the home. Every principal (and teacher) has had the experience of attempting to communicate and engage parents and the community with minimal success in involving them or keeping them involved.

Yet, by opening the lines of communication, principals risk being susceptible to criticism, which is likely to have a negative impact. Researchers agree that criticism of the school or visits to the school to complain tend to have a negative effect (Marzano, 2003). However, this is not to dismiss the importance of the parents' visits to the schools. In fact, research has shown that schools that involve parents in day-to-day operations reported lower absenteeism, truancy, and drop-out rates (Marzano, 2003). The key to balancing parent participation and input with criticism and complaints is providing parents a platform to voice their concerns and ideas regarding decisions that impact practices and program. The importance of parents' input in certain decisions needs to be communicated. To this end, establishing vehicles for communication between schools, parents, and the community is critical. The following pages present suggestions for effectively informing and engaging parents.

Suggestions for Effectively Informing and Engaging Parents

In *Educating Our Children Together: A Sourcebook for Effective Family-School-Community Partnerships,* Susanne Carter (2003) provides various strategies to effectively communicate with families. A few of these strategies include neighborhood meetings and walks, a parent information booth at the school, focus groups with parents, phone calls, e-mail, conferences, and home visits. Other study cases and research on effective parent communication suggest staffing someone who focuses on coordinating family, parent, and student involvement such as a parent coordinator, as well as teaching parents the importance of their involvement and that it matters and makes a difference. These strategies and suggestions are briefly described here.

Neighborhood Meetings and Walks
As implied by the name, neighborhood meetings are meetings held in and around the neighborhood of the school (but not in the school) in locations such as community centers, park districts, churches, and homes. The purpose of setting the meeting outside of the school is to create a less intimidating and more accessible and comfortable location. The meetings are a place for parents to ask questions about school programs and initiatives affecting their children. These meetings should be attended by district and school administrators as well as a significant number of teachers. The meetings could be composed of structured conversations, informal conversations, or a mix of both structured and informal conversations. A superintendent from a rural school in the northeastern states used this strategy to reach out to families and encourage more family involvement, and he found it very effective in engaging parents.

With neighborhood walks, school staff can knock on doors, meet families, and distribute informational flyers before the school year begins. For one school principal, this strategy is more than a one-time shot; instead, the principal commits to a certain number of face-to-face communications throughout the school year.

Parent Information Booth
Decorated welcome signs in multiple languages can help parents feel welcomed when they visit schools. When these school visits occur, having information readily available about upcoming workshops, activities, or other information parents need to know will help schools capitalize on the initial parent visit and optimize the possibility of increased parent attendance in upcoming workshops and activities. An elementary school in California did just that by establishing a Parent Information Booth to provide information about school workshops, community activities, and parenting classes.

Family Focus Groups
A great way to gauge family needs, concerns about their children's education, and their involvement, as well as learn more about parent's culture and beliefs, is through focus groups. Focus groups are also a great opportunity to brainstorm barriers and bridges to effectively communicating and engaging parents. When a focus group is being scheduled, location, time, and facilitation of potential restrictions (e.g., child care) need to be considered.

Informal Gatherings
Creating opportunities to meet, greet, and talk to parents is essential to building the bridge between the school and home. One way to meet and greet parents is to serve coffee in the morning while parents are dropping off students. Another way is to invite parents to breakfast with the principal. These gatherings can provide opportunities for parents to raise concerns and for staff to meet parents.

Positive Telephone Calls
Traditionally, teachers have made calls to the homes of students who were misbehaving, being bullied, or encountering a health emergency. The establishment of positive telephone calls prompts teachers to call parents in an effort to build a relationship between the family and school. This practice lets parents know that they will receive calls when the teacher needs to share important information about classroom work, homework, school schedules, and events, or just to find out if the parents have any questions or concerns about their child's progress.

In addition to positive telephone calls, some schools mail postcards or letters home to praise students.

> I'll never forget that years after some students went through our school, I could go into their homes, and every postcard they ever received from our staff was still prominently posted on the family refrigerator. And I do believe that having parents think positive thoughts about you and your school every time they get out the milk is probably very beneficial in establishing the relationship that you would like." (Whitaker & Fiore, 2001, p. 61)

Conferences: Student-Led, Mobile
School conferences are typically scheduled periodically throughout the school year around report card time. School conferences allow families to communicate face to face and individually with teachers concerning their children's academic progress.

- Traditionally, school conferences have been led by the teacher and included only the parent, but, to increase parent attendance, some schools are using student-led conferences.

- In areas where students are bussed from across town, some teachers are making conferences more convenient for parents to attend by meeting parents in nearby schools.

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates schools to involve parents in the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Preparing for IEP conferences requires communicating to parents the importance of their involvement and what happens at the meeting—explaining to parents who will be in the meeting, whom they can bring, and how they could best prepare for the meeting (e.g., visiting the classroom or reviewing relevant documents).

Newsletters
Newsletters, whether from the school or classroom teacher, can provide helpful and timely information such as suggested learning activities, upcoming tests, and study tips. As noted by Carter (2003), "Newsletters can include interactive features that allow for two-way communication, including columns written by family and community members and mini-surveys inviting family responses" (p. 54).

Technology Tools
Today, it is common for a school to have a website with a plethora of information for parents, students, and teachers. For parents, information such as staff names and contact information, school calendar and upcoming school events are usually available on school websites. Links to helpful homework websites also can be made available for parents. In addition to websites, principals and teachers are using e-mail and automated phone messages. Here are two examples:

- The New York City United Federation of Teachers maintains Dial-A-Teacher, a homework helping service for parents and students, 12 hours weekly in eight different languages (Carter, 2003).

- The Pioneer Central School District in Yorkshire, New York, uses a ParentCONNECT system maintained by the school district to communicate with parents. Logging on to the site, parents may access information about their children, including attendance records, discipline incidents, and health and immunization records. ParentCONNECT users may also subscribe to automated e-mail notification of attendance reports, discipline incidents, failing grades, or missing assignments (Carter, 2003).

Additional Resources for Effectively Informing and Engaging Parents

The **Parent Teacher Association (PTA)** is a national network of local and state parent teacher associations seeking to encourage parent and public involvement in public schools on behalf of children and youth in the schools. On the PTA website (www.pta.org/), there is a link to parent resources, which provide information about how parents can make a difference in student achievement, student safety, student health and wellness, and a student's exposure to media literature through rapidly changing technology.

The **National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education** is made up of various major education, advocacy, community, and public service organizations to advocate for greater parent, family, and community involvement in the education of children through partnerships that foster relationships among parents, families, communities, and schools. The website (www.ncpie.org) provides resources, which can be viewed by subject matter or by area of interest to specific audiences such as school administrators. The resources are from the organizations that make up the national coalition.

Picture of Practice:
Writing an Effective Letter to Solicit Parent Involvement

Ms. Hamilton is a principal at Rogers Middle School in a middle-class suburban community in Indiana. She is known as a direct, forceful leader whose thoughts and ideas are communicated very clearly and directly to all school staff and community members.

Leadership Task

As an active member in the community, Ms. Hamilton has been able to attract a handful of parents to the school on a regular basis. However, she is not satisfied with the level of parental involvement at her school, and she intends to reach a broader group of parents. The school is preparing a Thanksgiving party, and Ms. Hamilton is concerned about recruiting volunteers to help with a variety of chores. In the past, she has approached them through written communication, but she has been unable to attract more than a handful of regular volunteers. She pulls out her letter from the previous year:

[Date]

Dear Parents,

We are getting ready for our Thanksgiving celebrations. As you know, dinner preparations take time, and we are in need of parent volunteers. We are concerned about lack of parental involvement in our school. ***Please*** *remember that participation in your child's education is very important. We want you to volunteer.*

We are looking forward to seeing you here. Please check one or more activities below where you think you can help, sign this form, and return it back to us by October 15.

Thanks,
Ms. Hamilton

Challenges

After the note went home, only a few parents signed up as volunteers. Ms. Hamilton noticed that many of her regular enthusiastic supporters had not offered help either. The lack of motivation concerned her.

Knowing that her communication strategy had not worked, Ms. Hamilton begins to realize that her message to parents needs to be turned around, and that the current communication style and strategy may be a schoolwide problem that will need to be addressed in different ways. Reflecting on the letter, Ms. Hamilton recognizes that she should focus on the model behavior that she wants to attain instead of emphasizing the lack of parent engagement.

In preparation for the next staff meeting, she copies her letter so she can distribute it among her staff and use it as a kick-off for an activity.

Staff Meeting Activity

Purpose

- To unify style in written communications with parents and send a positive message. (Treat everyone as if they were good.)
- To practice a writer's workshop format.

Preparation

- Ask your staff to bring to the meeting any samples of letters or notes to parents where they are asking for volunteer help.
- Make an overhead copy of one of your written messages to parents.

Activity

- Read your own letter to staff.
- Ask for feedback.
- Revise your letter on the overhead, using the staff's feedback, and make sure to emphasize positive behavior.
- Display your revised letter on the overhead projector and address the following:
  - Shift emphasis from negative to positive behavior.
  - Translate letters for parents who are not English speakers.
  - Be sensitive to students who do not live with parents.
  - Pay attention to time-related issues: date the letter and acknowledge that parents are busy people.

[Date]

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Friends,

Thank you for helping us with our kick-off picnic. Your time is very much appreciated. We welcome you at our school and most importantly we want to see you again at our Thanksgiving dinner. Since preparations take time and we have so little of it, I would like you to tell us what would be the best way to contribute to our celebration. Please check the box that applies:

❑ *I will attend.*

❑ *I will help with decorations.*

❑ *I will help with cooking.*

❑ *I will help with clean up.*

Many thanks! Please return this form to us by _____.

- Repeat the process with another sample of written communication to parents.

Study Group Activity

In a formal or informal study, mentoring, or coaching group, discuss the communication strategies that seem to be working effectively in each principal's school. Consider why these strategies are working well and the evidence that indicates they are working well. Share current challenges with communicating effectively with parents and obtaining parent involvement. Brainstorm potential solutions to these challenges.

My Personal Plan

Assess the school's written communication. What key features have been effective? How do you know?

Based on the assessment of your written communication, what is your plan for communicating more effectively with parents?

To what extend are you using community based organizations (CBOs) to communicate with parents? How do you think you could make better use of CBOs?

Effectively Managing Financial Resource Allocation and Funding

Whenever a school undergoes changes, be it staffing or programmatic changes, school resources need to be reallocated and, in some cases, additional resources need to be garnered. Researchers and educators alike have recognized that obtaining additional resources is usually an unlikely viable option, especially for financially strapped corporations and schools. The focus on resources has shifted from "more is better" to "doing what you can with what you have" as a growing body of research looks to describe what schools are doing to reallocate resources and the best practices for reallocating resources, given the performance levels of the school's students.

Studies examining reallocation patterns and barriers of identified successful district-level practices have found that higher school performance is associated with higher spending for instruction, core expenditures, and teachers—and lower spending for general administration and administrative staff (Pan, Rudo, & Smith-Hansen, 2003). At the school level, research suggests that additional programs and funds are used to secure significant resources for professional development and school programs that support the school improvement plan (Hawley-Miles, n.d.). Gaining an understanding of school resources, and which resources are controlled by the school and which by the corporation, is a great starting point in rethinking how to reallocate resources. Resources that are likely to be controlled by the school are staff expenditures. To better understand resources allotted and spent on staff, staffing can be broken down by the various positions and titles into six categories: classroom teachers, regular education specialists (e.g., art, music), categorical program specialists (e.g., Title I, ESL), pupil support specialists (e.g., nurses, counselors), aides, and other staff (e.g., clerical, cafeteria, custodial) (Archibald & Odden, 2000).

Having the same understanding about programs—what they are, the resources allocated to them, and who controls these resources—is much more challenging, and in some instances, a bit of a gray area. One place to look for programmatic resource allocation is the school improvement plan. The school improvement plan integrates all local, state, and federal programs and resources into a comprehensive document that provides direction to the school for effective functioning in schoolwide improvement efforts, such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom environment, professional development, parent/family involvement, school management, and technology. Examples of federal programs include Reading First, Comprehensive School Reform, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The school improvement plan includes known and anticipated funds.

Table 4 may be used as an organizer or an informational resource guide as you plan, implement, and monitor the continuous improvement plan progress in your school.

Table 4. Program and Resource Integration

Grant	Amount and Fund Source	Grant Purpose	Allocation of Grant Funds		
			Personnel	Materials/ Supplies	Professional Development
Early Childhood: Block Grant		The Early Childhood Block grant provides early childhood and family education programs and services for children under the age of 5 and their families. The purpose is to ensure that young children enter school ready to learn. 8 percent of these funds must be spent on services to children ages 0–2.			
NCLB: Reading First Grant		The Reading First grant is a federal initiative authorized by the NCLB Act for Grades K–3. Reading instruction is concentrated on the five key areas identified as essential components of effective reading instruction.			
Gifted Education		Grants increase achievement of identified gifted students.			
NCLB Title I: Targeting		Title I provides assistance for supplemental instructional programs for low-income children in Grades PK–12 who are at risk of not meeting state standards. Funds support reading, math, and staff development.			

Grant	Amount and Fund Source	Grant Purpose	Allocation of Grant Funds		
NCLB Title II-A Teacher Quality		Title II teacher quality/class-size reduction			
NCLB Title II-D Educational Technology		The primary goal of this grant is to improve student achievement through the use of technology in elementary and secondary schools.			
NCLB Title IV-A		Title IV supports safe and drug-free schools and disciplined environments conducive to learning.			
NCLB Title V Innovative Programs		Title V is designated to be broad in scope.			
Title VI-B Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP)		The REAP initiatives are designed to help small rural school districts that lack the personnel and resources to compete effectively for federal competitive grants and that receive grant allocations in amounts that are too small to be effective in meeting their intended.			
Reading Improvement		Reading grants improve K–6 reading achievement and study skills.			
Title IV-B 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC)		The 21st CCLC program is an opportunity for students and their families to continue to learn new skills and discover new abilities after the school day has ended.			

Grant	Amount and Fund Source	Grant Purpose	Allocation of Grant Funds		
Comprehensive School Reform (CSR)		The CSR program is an important NCLB component. It is helping raise student achievement by assisting public schools across the country to implement effective, comprehensive school reforms that are based upon SBR and effective practices.			
Goals 2000: Education Improvement		These grants help schools set challenging standards in core subjects and develop improvement plans to help all children reach the standards.			
Title VI: Innovative Education Program Strategies		Innovative programs support student achievement.			
Special Education: State Grants		Special education programs support special-needs students.			
Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs: Comprehensive School Grants		Bilingual and minority grants support English language learners.			

Grant	Amount and Fund Source	Grant Purpose	Allocation of Grant Funds		
Ameritech Community Involvement		Ameritech contributes time and money to support programs that improve education, economic development, and quality of life. The program's work strengthens the fabric of hundreds of communities in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin.			
Dreyer's Foundation, Fort Wayne		The foundation has two grant programs that support learning. The Grand Expectations program supports unique programs and projects that promote excellence in young people and establish high expectations for them. The Dream the Dream competition rewards young people who design a project or program that improves the quality of life for their neighborhoods or communities and helps young people learn how to learn. A limited number of requests will be considered from markets where Dreyer's or Edy's products are sold (small grants) and where an employee is involved (large grants).			

Grant	Amount and Fund Source	Grant Purpose	Allocation of Grant Funds		
The Community Foundation of Boone County, Indiana		Grants are made for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the citizens of Boone County in one or more of the following areas: arts and humanities, community development, education, scholarships, the elderly, the environment, health, human services, or youth.			
Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy		The mission of the foundation is to establish literacy as a value in every family in America.			
Laura Bush Foundation		The foundation will make grants of amounts up to $5,000 to school libraries. The funds are to be used to update, extend, and diversify the book collections of those libraries. Any school may apply, but priority for grants will be given to those schools in which 75 to 100 percent of the school population receives free or reduced-price lunches. Applications may be submitted online; however, print forms will be accepted.			

Grant	Amount and Fund Source	Grant Purpose	Allocation of Grant Funds		
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation		The foundation focuses on helping to improve people's lives through health and learning. Its staff continues to look for strategic opportunities to extend the benefits of modern science and technology to people around the world, especially where poverty is a contributing obstacle to participating in these benefits.			
National Foundation for the Improvement of Education		National Foundation for the Improvement of Education provides grants and assistance to teachers, education support personnel, and higher education faculty and staff to improve student learning in the nation's public schools.			

Grant	Amount and Fund Source	Grant Purpose	Allocation of Grant Funds		
Teacher Grants: National Geographic Society Education Foundation		This year, the Education Foundation plans to award more than $100,000 in grants of up to $5,000 each to help teachers—or a group of educators—make an even greater impact in their classroom, school, district, and/or community through innovative geography education projects. In accordance with its mission statement, the foundation seeks to fund projects in either of two broad categories: (1) promoting geographic knowledge through education, and (2) promoting stewardship of natural and cultural resources.			

The following picture of practice (see p. 110) depicts how one principal is confronting a resource-allocation issue that requires a budgetary decision of reducing staffing and increasing classroom size to accommodate a program requested by parents.

Picture of Practice:
Reallocating Resources

School Westfield is not in restructuring according to NCLB guidelines. The school is located in an area where 60 percent of the families are homeowners, 63 percent of the students meet or exceed state standards in reading, and 71 percent meet or exceed state standards in math. The parent organization plays a key role in the school and actively participates in curriculum and school management workshops.

At the school, 80 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. State Title I funds are used to pay for additional teachers to reduce class sizes and to pay teachers to run afterschool tutoring programs. One of the first-grade teacher positions is funded through Title I (Title I funds can not be used to pay teacher salaries in Indiana. Funding a teacher is for this scenario only). This teacher has 10 years teaching experience and holds a master's degree. The principal recently hired a new fourth-grade teacher, who is a recent college graduate with no teaching experience. Parents are pushing for an extension of the afterschool programs to include more students in homework clubs. The principal doesn't have the funds needed to pay additional teachers to work after school.

Leadership Task

Given the budget constraints, the principal is facing challenges: Should he keep the first-grade teacher (and not extend the number of students per class up to 32), or increase the number of fourth-grade students up to 33 per class (letting the fourth-grade Title I teacher go) to accommodate the parents who want more funding to be put in the afterschool homework clubs?

The principal must decide how to spend the Title I funding allotted to Westfield School. This is a budget decision, as well as a human-resource-allocation decision. It is also a priority issue in which the stakeholders (parents) and administration and teachers are not in agreement as to how the Title I funds should be used.

There are many ways to resolve this issue. One is to allocate part of the funds to the homework clubs and part of the funds to the teacher salary need. As instructional leader of the school, the principal is expected to base budget decisions on existing school needs. During this challenging time calling for greater accountability to student achievement, deciding to increase class size could take away from student achievement goals, just as adding resources to the homework clubs could add to the student achievement goals.

Recognizing the need for increased funding to meet the school's needs, the principal could begin the process of building school capacity in grant-writing skills to identify foundations and other funding to expand the homework club staff.

Challenges

The school improvement plan's goals and objectives should be aligned with the decisions made regarding the allocation of funds available. Both budget needs support the school's highest priority—that of improving student achievement.

Reaching consensus with stakeholders is often very difficult, and for this reason, the response to this kind of decision often is to adopt an incremental approach intended to alleviate potential tensions among stakeholders. This approach would increase the homework club budget by a certain percentage and the teacher salary budget by a certain percentage.

Paramount to the budget process is the lawful use of resources within designated funds requirements. The principal is accountable for how school funds are used and for ensuring that funding decisions align with school improvement goals and objectives.

Displaying Leadership Qualities

As instructional leader of the school, the principal must help stakeholders see the vision for ongoing school improvement and work toward achieving the school's goals—even when there is a lag in the process of what the principal would like to do. The principal's integrity and honesty will go along way in helping the parent group to understand that he has decided to maintain the two teachers as he continues to seek funding elsewhere for expanding the afterschool staff.

Implementation Plan

The implementation of the budgeting process is aligned with the planning of the funds and should be driven by the school's academic goals. Creation of the budget should occur with input and discussion from teachers, parents, and other groups who are invested in the school's goals.

Budgetary decisions should be presented to stakeholders as well as central office personnel. It is important that the principal articulates the rationale for the budget priorities and decisions.

Strategic Planning

There are possible funding sources that Westfield School could access beyond the federal and state funds. The school principal should work with a committee to develop a strategic plan on ways to receive and allocate such funds to meet student and community needs.

Self-Reflection Questions

- What are some strategies the principal could use to address both funding needs?

- How important is it for the principal to maximize the satisfaction of the parent group?

- What is the best approach for the principal to use to help parents understand the relationship between student achievement and class size?

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Resources and Tools for School Finance Management

Summary by Funding Source

Goal 1	Activity	Title I	Title II	Title IV	Title VI	Gifted	Tech	Voc Ed	Gen Rev	Reading Imp.	CSR	21st CCLC	Other
SUB TOTAL													

Goal 2	Activity	Title I	Title II	Title IV	Title VI	Gifted	Tech	Voc Ed	Gen Rev	Reading Imp.	CSR	21st CCLC	Other
SUB TOTAL													

Goal 3	Activity	Title I	Title II	Title IV	Title VI	Gifted	Tech	Voc Ed	Gen Rev	Reading Imp.	CSR	21st CCLC	Other
SUB TOTAL													

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Grant Descriptors

	Title I
Description of Grant	Improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged
Source of Grant	Federal
Purpose: Targeted Population	To ensure that all children have a fair, equal, significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments
Plus/Minus	• Ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum and instructional materials are aligned with state standards • Meeting the needs of low achieving children, limited-English-proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children, and young children in need of assistance with reading
Additional Relevant Information	• Schoolwide programs • Highly qualified staff • Parental involvement • Participation of children enrolled in private schools

	Title II
Description of Grant	Improving Teacher Quality: All students taught by quality teachers—funding that works
Source of Grant	Federal
Purpose: Targeted Population	Provide grants to increase student academic achievement by: • Improving teacher and principal quality • Increasing the number of high-quality teachers, principals, and assistant principals in schools • Hold LEAs and schools accountable so all teachers teaching core academic subjects in public schools are highly qualified
Plus/Minus	• Professional development to improve the knowledge of teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals through effective instructional practices and early and appropriate interventions • Supplement and not supplement
Additional Relevant Information	• Required part of NCLB plan • Programs to encourage men to become elementary teachers • Time limit to become highly qualified

	Title IV
Description of Grant	Foster a safe and drug-free learning environment that supports academic achievement; be consistent with the principles of effectiveness
Source of Grant	Federal
Purpose: Targeted Population	To teach students that most people do not illegally use drugs; teach students to recognize social and peer pressure; teach students about the dangers of emerging drugs; reinforce (in secondary schools) prevention activities from elementary schools
Plus/Minus	Each LEA or consortium of such agencies may use funds to carry out activities that comply with the principles of effectiveness, such as age-appropriate and developmentally based activities, activities that involve families, dissemination of drug and violence prevention information to schools and communities, drug and violence prevention activities.
Additional Relevant Information	NCLB requires a uniform management information and reporting system.

	Free Lunch and Breakfast
Description of Grant	Indiana law requires every school to provide free lunches to eligible, needy children.
Source of Grant	State
Purpose: Targeted Population	All needy children eligible for free lunches are eligible for free breakfasts if the school participates in the breakfast program.
Plus/Minus	Failure to provide free lunches for the needy could result in withheld reimbursement.
Additional Relevant Information	If an LEA is eligible for services under the national school lunch program, it is eligible for services under the state program.

	Gifted
Description of Grant	This legislation was intended to encourage and help schools develop educational services for gifted and talented children.
Source of Grant	State
Purpose: Targeted Population	To assist in the implementation of components of the LEA's Comprehensive Gifted Education Plan, an integrated part of the standard school program
Plus/Minus	Activities charged to this grant must be directly related to the development of instructional services for identified gifted students who are part of the standard school program. These funds may not be used to support contest participation or extracurricular activities, meals, or lodging expenses.
Additional Relevant Information	The process of identifying children as gifted and talented shall be determined by the LEA.

	21st Century Community Learning Centers
Description of Grant	The 21st CCLC program creates centers that provide students with academic enrichment opportunities outside the regular school day, as well as additional activities designed to complement their regular academic program.
Source of Grant	Federal (NCLB)
Plus/Minus	Grants will be made only to applicants that primarily serve students who attend schools with a high concentration of poor students, with priority to applicants serving children in low-performing schools.
Additional Relevant Information	These centers must also offer these students' families the following: literacy and related educational development activities; drug- and violence-prevention programs; counseling programs; and art, music, and recreation programs. Programs are site based rather than by district.

	Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD)
Description of Grant	CSRD programs emphasize a systemic approach to reorganize and revitalize entire schools. CSR uses research-based, well-documented models for schoolwide changes that are supported by expert trainers and facilitators. Increased student performance, strong professional development, and substantial parental and community support are hallmarks of successful CSR.
Source of Grant	Federal
Plus/Minus	• School districts with school(s) designated for Title I School Improvement • The application process is a portfolio development and review, closely tied to the development of the school improvement plan.

	Reading First
Description of Grant	The purpose is to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade.
Source of Grant	Federal
Plus/Minus	Reading First focuses instructional methods and materials, assessments, and professional development on five key areas. Programs receiving funds must demonstrate their ability to address these areas in a comprehensive and effective manner.
Additional Relevant Information	Five essential areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension

	Migrant Education
Description of Grant	The basic aim is to provide improved educational opportunities for educationally deprived youth for eligible children of agricultural workers.
Source of Grant	Federal
Purpose: Targeted Population	Migrant children
Plus/Minus	
Additional Relevant Information	

	Emergency Immigrant Education
Description of Grant	Funds for educational services for immigrant children and youth enrolled in elementary and secondary public and nonpublic schools. The services include specialized instruction or support by ESL/bilingual teachers/aides/tutors; purchasing of materials/equipment, tutorials; mentoring or academic/career counseling; family-literacy and parent-outreach activities; staff development activities; and other services.
Source of Grant	Federal
Purpose: Targeted Population	Children who are not born in the United States, or in any of its possessions or territories, and who have been attending U.S. schools for less than three complete academic years, are eligible to participate.
Plus/Minus	Eligible school districts are districts in which the number of such immigrant children enrolled in the district is at least 500, or is equal to at least 3 percent of the total number of students enrolled, whichever is less.

Study Group Activity

Prior to meeting in a formal or informal study group, mentoring, or coaching group of principals, ask which principal is facing a challenge with providing resources for all the current staff and programs. Ask this principal to come to the next meeting prepared to share his or her school improvement plan, resource documents, and tables. As a group, review the current resource allocations and school needs. Based on the experiences of other principals in the group, consider how current resources are allocated to support the school improvement plan, and how resources could be allocated to further support the school improvement plan and directly impact student learning. Brainstorm potential reallocation of resources.

My Personal Plan

To ensure that I am using "best practices" for allocating and reallocating resources so that the resources have the greatest impact on student achievement and stability in the school community, my plan is…

Sustaining Leadership

"Effective leadership maintains improvements from one leader to the next and spreads across many leaders and schools in the district, not just one or two." (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003, p. 80)

This guidebook has presented research, tools, resources, processes, procedures, and pictures of practice that depict the role of the principal as an instructional leader seeking to create change that will improve the teaching and learning aspects in the school. At one point or another, almost all experienced principals have been on the road to instructional leadership and have kept their eye on instruction while managing school resources, discipline policies, and communication with parents. Yet, for many of these principals, the road didn't lead to the next checkpoint that would yield better teaching and learning results. Many principals find themselves in roundabouts when support or interest is lost on the original road. In these cases, the principals may move onto the road with "new and exciting" changes that are said to yield quicker results indicative of student improvement. The long road to continuous improvement and improved learning looks unattractive next to the shiny and new quick road to student improvement.

The impatience of stakeholders and the traditional norms of education are the silver bullets that eradicate sustainability before it even emerges. Sustainability is *not* about "staying the course" on the same road where change started, especially if no one other than the change facilitator (typically, the principal) is committed to the road. To decide whether or not to stay the course along the same road, the principal must give thoughtful consideration to the reserve and use of resources. The principal should consider if resources could be used in other ways that will have a larger impact on student learning and staff development. In other words, are the current road of change and the accompanying resources merely raising test scores without deepening the aspects of teaching and learning? (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003).

So, what is sustainability? It has six key characteristics:

- Improvement that sustains learning, not merely changes that alter schooling

- Improvement that endures over time

- Improvement that can be supported by available or achievable resources

- Improvement that is a shared responsibility

- Improvement that does not negatively impact the surrounding community

- Improvement that promotes diversity and capacity building throughout the school community (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003)

To incur sustainable school leadership, the instructional principal's focus should be on deepening aspects that support and improve teaching and learning. In addition, the principal should view sustainability of school leadership as a system composed of various individuals. If the principal is the only person who is part of school leadership, it is

critical to build capacity among teachers and assistant principals by engaging them in leadership roles and activities in order to sustain leadership. Given the high turnover rates of principals, a school needs to be able to function smoothly when principals are transitioned in and out of the school. Typically, principals begin the process of building leadership capacity with a small group of individuals who were either hand picked or demonstrated leadership qualities. However, the success of sustainable leadership lies in creating distributed leadership throughout the school. Leadership cannot rest on the shoulders of administration alone. If principals and administrators are to distribute leadership responsibilities, to whom will they distribute it? Teacher and parent leaders have a significant role to play in distributed leadership.

A Final Word

Much has been written on the principalship, and there is consensus that the job has changed over time, becoming more time consuming and complicated. It is a potentially powerful position because the person who occupies it might be able to accomplish significant gains. Probably the most important (and least recognized) element to the new principal is to "fight for lost causes" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 119). "Fighting for lost causes may mean not giving up on difficult students whom everyone has abandoned. Or, it may mean not giving in to governments whose reforms don't have students' interests at heart. The scale of the struggle may vary, but the principle is the same" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 120). When leaders are prepared to fight for lost causes, they set the tone for so many others. Principals should also keep in mind that leadership is connected to a larger purpose. "In teaching, resilience is an essential capacity, and hope is its regenerative fuel. It can be found in a class of difficult students [or] in a staff room of committed colleagues" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 120). Being a principal is not for the "faint of heart," and new principals will be much more effective (and healthier) if they hold their hopes high as they take on the mantle of leadership.

My Personal Plan

Sustaining improvement

Distributing leadership

Leadership successions

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Appendix